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UAV Strikes: Effects on the United States Counterterrorism Strategy

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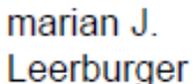
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UAV STRIKES: EFFECT ON THE UNITED STATES
COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY

A Master Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

American Public University System

by

Elyse Crimm

In Partial Fulfillment of the

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of

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

UAV STRIKES: EFFECT ON THE UNITED STATES
COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY

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This research will examine the U.S. lethal use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in the Middle East and analyze the positive and negative effects on the U.S. counterterrorism strategy. UAV use against terrorists in the Middle East offers many advantages including long loiter times and pilot safety, but also offers disadvantages including negative public reaction. A qualitative methodology is used through an extensive literature review relating to the effects of lethal UAV use in the Middle East. The qualitative study focused on the U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy, legal considerations, success rates and public opinion/potential blowback of lethal UAV strikes. Variables are analyzed through the psychological lenses of attitude and emotion to set reaction baselines. These baselines are then used to predict future counterterrorism strategy effectiveness. The analysis finds that the U.S. counterterrorism strategy success will be negatively impacted due to negative public opinion and increased violence in reaction to the strikes.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States has been at war with terrorism for decades, but the September 11, 2001 attacks brought the issue to the forefront of the country's mind and policy. For the past fourteen years, the U.S. has attempted to keep up with the ever-evolving threat from the Middle East and now at home. In the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism, President Obama stated, "Despite our successes, we continue to face a significant terrorist threat from al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and its adherents." (The White House 2011, i) Although some of the successes are monumental, including the elimination of Usama bin Laden and thwarting of terrorist attacks, the enemy continues to challenge the U.S and its allies. One of the tactics used to complete the missions outlined in the counterterrorism strategy is the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).

The MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper are the two most common UAVs used to perform Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) in conjunction with unmanned aerial strikes. The National Defense Authorization Act of fiscal year 2001 laid out a goal for the U.S. Armed Forces to operate the fielding of UAVs so that, "by 2010, one-third of the aircraft in the operational deep strike force aircraft fleet are unmanned; and by 2015, one-third of the operational ground combat vehicles are unmanned." (Pietrucha 2013, 39) This Act began the dramatic increase in UAV use the U.S. military has seen. UAVs, also called drones, offer distinct advantages to manned aircraft in the realm of cost, size, human safety, rapid deployment timelines, visibility and long dwell times. However, the MQ-1 and MQ-9's design currently is only suitable for uncontested airspace (2013). UAVs can be used in contested airspace; however, an escort of manned aircraft is necessary to ensure survivability of the unmanned aircraft. Due to

this reason, traditional manned fighter aircraft still provide an advantage in areas where the U.S. has not secured air supremacy.

UAVs provide the United States with many advantageous capabilities. Predator and Reaper aircraft specifically have fairly unique missions. According to the U.S. Air Force Fact Sheets, both aircraft are “an armed, multi-mission, medium-altitude, long-endurance remotely piloted aircraft that is employed primarily as an intelligence-collection asset and secondarily against dynamic execution targets” (2010a and 2010b). Most importantly to the public, the aircraft can operate without risk to the pilot’s life. This safety factor allows for operations in hostile territory and the remote piloting allows for operating times unconstrained by pilot endurance or shift schedules. UAVs also offer long loiter times and persistent coverage during which they collect more intelligence than personnel are able to analyze. General Cartwright expanded that throughout the Libya campaign, the UAVs “longer flight times (up to 24 hours), superior sensors, low speed, and low altitude flight reduced the risk of collateral damage.” (Foust and Boyle 2012, 6) The aircraft are able to fly for long hours without refueling and can provide a commander on the ground Full-Motion Video (FMV) of the area of operation. Predators and Reapers can patrol convoy routes, the aircraft’s presence can deter attacks on people and buildings, support ground force raids, and support patrols around base perimeters. Additionally, the Predator and Reaper can be equipped with armament including Hellfire missiles, which allow the aircraft to hunt insurgents and execute precision attacks. The aircraft are supported by Sensor Operators who have a background in intelligence and are trained to ensure collateral damage is minimized (Thompson 2006). The precision strike capability along with the intelligence personnel allow for a lowered risk of collateral damage than traditional fighter aircraft. The lowered collateral damage risk is a major advantage to the U.S.’s incorporation of the platform

into the nation's counterterrorism strategy. For these reasons, Predators and Reapers have become popular aircraft to perform ISR and strike missions in areas where the U.S. has secured air supremacy or has permission to operate by the area of operation's local government.

UAV lethal use can also have many disadvantages. UAVs are remotely piloted, which is safer for the pilot, but can give the perception of disproportional warfare. The aircraft can be extremely lethal to its target, but completely safe for its operator. In past wars and warfare, a perceived tradeoff existed between the attacker's safety and the security of civilians in the area, which made collateral damage more acceptable (Megret 2013, 30). Pakistan's collateral damage numbers highlight why there has been blowback from UAV strikes. The increase in total deaths by UAVs is not proportional with the increase in High Value Individual (HVI) deaths (Hudson 2011, 124-125). These strikes have driven a worsening radicalization in Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to Shah, "the country's worsening anti-Americanism is driven more by the portrayal of the drones in the Pakistani media, which paints them as a scourge targeting innocent civilians, than by the drones themselves" (Shah 2012, 61). This statement underscores the importance media coverage has on public opinion, specifically in the countries where UAVs operate.

The use of UAVs to strike and kill individuals in the Middle East has dramatically increased in the years since 9/11. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan has been a safe haven for terrorists (Laygo et al. 2012) making this area a focus for UAV strikes, although not the only area of UAV operations. President Bush made a decision after 9/11 to militarily intervene in Afghanistan. This decision resulted in ousting the Taliban within three months; however, many of the al-Qa'ida and Taliban leadership found safe haven in the FATA. On June 18, 2004 the U.S. conducted its first UAV strike in Pakistan. This strike killed Nek

Mohammed, a militant commander who pronounced his jihad against the U.S. and his commitment to give Taliban and al-Qa'ida forces sanctuary (Plaw and Fricker 2012). This UAV strike began a long and controversial campaign in Pakistan, which has grown over the past decade.

Threat of attack from terrorists in Pakistan remains viable. Indications remain that al Qa'ida and its allies continue to design and support attacks against the U.S. Additionally, the Taliban protects al Qa'ida, permitting the group to pursue these attacks. The Afghan Taliban continues to execute attacks on the U.S. and ISAF troops in Afghanistan using Pakistan to stage the attacks. The government of Pakistan is unlikely to completely eliminate safe havens or establish complete control over the Afghan border. Therefore, immediate threats to the U.S. and its allies show no indication of diminishing (Plaw and Fricker 2012). One of the best ways, tactically, for the U.S. to counter this threat is through the use of UAVs to strike the terrorists in Pakistan.

UAV strikes can offer precise and effective kills, but they can also provoke retaliatory attacks. Non-militants who are victimized by UAV strikes, either by being directly targeted or having close friends or family killed in an attack, can become new adversaries. As of 2012, UAVs had reportedly executed lethal strikes in six countries: Somalia, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan and Iraq. In many of the countries the U.S. has led UAV strikes, there have not been long-term positive results. In Pakistan, the use of UAVs has resulted in significant social and political blowback culminating in anti-Americanism. Following UAV strikes, militant activity is temporarily interrupted, but when the strikes decrease, militant violence resumes (Foust and Boyle 2012, 7). Additionally, technology and social media has allowed for increasing media coverage and public opinion exposure on the subject. Public opinion is an important factor in

policy and the perceived effectiveness of policy. In 2013, Pakistanis voted to outlaw the use of UAVs and gave the Pakistani president the right to shoot down any UAVs operating in the country (Palmer 2013). The increase in violence, strengthening of terrorist organizations and rise in public opinion about UAV strikes triggers the research question: How will the use of UAV strikes in the Middle East affect the success of the United States' counterterrorism strategy?

This paper will examine the United States' lethal use of UAVs in the Middle East since 2001 and the positive and negative effects on its counterterrorism strategy. The focus will be on the U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy, legal aspects, success rates, and public opinion/potential blowback of using UAVs to lethally strike high value targets. These variables will be analyzed through the political psychological lenses of attitude and emotion. The passage of the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) began the use of UAVs to lethally strike targets. In 2009, after President Obama was sworn into office, the use of UAV strikes dramatically increased, as did media reporting on the subject (Foust and Boyle 2012 and McKelvey 2012, 3). The country's lethal use of UAVs provides many advantages, but many disadvantages accompany the policy, especially in the public opinion realm.

In order to understand public opinion consequences, political psychology theories need to be incorporated into analysis of the subject. Attitude and emotion theories provide the most relevance to the outcome of UAV lethal use. These theories can aid in the understanding of how the general public in the U.S. and in affected countries in the Middle East should be expected to react to the use of UAVs to lethally strike targets. The analysis of human reaction through a political psychological lens will provide a different view to this problem set than has been researched in the past.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Currently, there is significant literature on the increased use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to kill terrorists in the Middle East. The literature focuses on testimonies from those affected by strikes in the Middle East, legal and ethical aspects of the strikes, and limited quantitative studies correlating strikes and terrorist activity. One gap in the literature is analyzing the long-term effect these programs will specifically have on the U.S. counterterrorism strategy. The review of literature on the subject will be broken up into the following four sections to fully understand the situation: U.S. counterterrorism strategy, legal aspects, success rates and public opinion/potential blowback.

U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy

The most important document to review in order to understand the country's strategy is the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism. Additionally, the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, John Brennan, spoke at the Wilson Center in the piece "The Ethics and Efficacy of the President's Counterterrorism Strategy". These two works will serve as the primary authority for the U.S. counterterrorism strategy.

Al-Qa'ida was the largest counterterrorism threat the U.S. faced in 2011 when the Strategy was written. The group posed a threat from all over the world including South Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, Europe, Iraq, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia, which made these regions the Strategy's areas of focus. The Strategy makes clear the U.S. is at war with al-Qa'ida; however, the U.S. is not at war with the religion of Islam or the tactic of terrorism (The White House 2011). The latter distinction is contrary to the common phrase, 'war on terror'.

This deliberate word choice will be important when discussing legal aspects of the lethal use of UAVs.

There are many tools the U.S. has to counter terrorism. The Strategy also lays out the various strategic tools for this purpose. The military, civilians and core values will be complemented by development, diplomacy, the power of the private sector and strategic communications. This multinational and multi-departmental effort allows the U.S. to engage in a sustained, broad and integrated campaign (The White House 2011, 2). One of the most important aspects of the Strategy is the mandate to always be in line with the U.S. core values. Ensuring policy is in line with the core values and the Constitution of the United States is an important aspect of UAV use and will be discussed further in the legal section.

Counterterrorism strategy specifics for UAV use are necessary to understand the full strategy. Brennan's speech compliments the Strategy's outline of the government's broad approach to counterterrorism by going into the specifics of the U.S. use of UAVs to lethally strike al-Qa'ida targets. Brennan acknowledges the U.S. is the first nation to use UAV strikes regularly and because of this fact, the way the U.S. uses them will set precedents for any nation wanting to employ them in the future. Brennan asserts UAV strikes follow the principles of necessity, distinction, proportionality and humanity (2012). Ensuring the U.S. follows these principles in relation to UAV strikes is extremely important because of the precedent the strikes set. Brennan's speech has the possibility of having a bias because of his position in the government. When a new National Strategy for Counterterrorism is published, this paper will need to be reassessed.

Legal Aspects

A large part of the debate regarding lethal UAV use is legality. Overall, the

counterterrorism strategy should take the fight to those directly involved in past and future terrorist attacks and serve as a deterrent for individuals who consider becoming involved in terrorist activities (Guiora 2012, 255). The details of how to ensure the strategy is implemented without breaking any laws is of the utmost importance. Brennan clearly states in his speech that the U.S. is at war with al-Qa'ida, which allows the U.S. to use UAVs to lethally strike al-Qa'ida targets. This authority comes from the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), which “authorized the president ‘to use all necessary and appropriate forces’ against those nations, organizations, and individuals responsible for 9/11” (2012). The premise that al-Qa'ida and its allies attacked the United States and continue to threaten the country puts the U.S. at war with the named organizations and therefore can legally use lethal force out of self-defense.

Additionally, referencing specifically the terrorists operating out of the FATA, if the Pakistani government is unable to eliminate the threat, the U.S. must defend itself and its allies. UAVs are the most precise weapon to eliminate the threat (Plaw and Fricker 2012). The AUMF makes clear that within the correct constraints, lethal UAV use is legal. Part of the argument lies in whether or not all persons targeted and killed meet this description.

Another authority for UAV strikes comes from International Humanitarian Law. This type of law ensures strikes are carried out in accordance with the principles of humanity, distinction, military necessity and proportionality (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Center 2012, 112). As discussed above, Brennan assured the public in his speech the U.S. follows these principles when executing UAV strikes. However, these principles are not always easy to follow. In the case of distinction, many fighters and civilians regularly interact, ‘terrorists’ do not wear uniforms, and they partake in routine activities. In order to follow the principle of distinction, the target has to take a direct part in hostilities before a UAV can strike.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, in order to constitute “direct participation in hostilities, the act committed must adversely and directly affect the opposing party in a concrete manner or lead to the loss of life or property as part of a campaign in support of one party to a conflict.” (2012, 112-113) The civilian cannot merely pick up a weapon to be considered a combatant. The individual has to become a participant of the armed forces of a party in a conflict. Additionally, combatants cannot be targeted if they have surrendered (Lewis 2012, 309). Members of al-Qa’ida fit the profile of a participant of an armed force of a Party in a conflict, which makes members legal targets under International Humanitarian Law. These laws make clear the strikes are legal, as long as international and domestic laws are followed and the target is a legitimate military target.

A possible loophole to some of these laws is the use of the CIA to conduct UAV strikes. As long as action does not breach domestic law, the President has authority to authorize the CIA past the constraints of Congressional authorization. This additional authority may allow the President to “authorize the CIA to take pre-emptive lethal action in self-defense against terrorists in response to an imminent threat, without first obtaining Congressional approval.” (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Center 2012, 120) Additionally, the approval orders to the CIA for actions such as UAV strikes are not public. This classification barrier makes examining the authorizations difficult for the general public. However, even if Congress does not have to approve the action, the CIA’s actions cannot violate the Constitution of the United States.

The ethical side of using UAVs lethally is also found throughout the applicable literature. Brunstetter and Braun take a look at the ‘just war’ concept, which President Obama referenced in his 2009 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. This concept suggests that only

when the following conditions are met is war justified: “if it is waged as a last resort or in self-defense; if the force used is proportional; and if, whenever possible, civilians are spared from violence” (2011, 37). These themes are common across international and domestic laws on the subject. According to Brennan, UAV strikes follow the necessity, distinction, proportionality and humanity principles (2012), but this thought is debated within the community. UAVs put the pilot and analysts thousands of miles away, which can make discriminating between combatants and non-combatants more difficult. This difficulty does not follow the principle of distinction. On the other side, the pilots and analysts are out of harms way, so they can focus on the discrimination, instead of having to focus on their own safety and well being.

UAV strike planning and traditional military air strike planning are generally different. Military air strikes, or those executed by traditional fighter aircraft, are frequently ‘called in’ in zones of armed conflict. The strikes are made with limited supporting intelligence, but are rarely scrutinized for legal or ethical issues. Conversely, the CIA’s UAV strikes are frequently “pre-planned, intelligence-led operations, vetted in advance by lawyers and intelligence experts and executed outside of normal theaters of military operations.” (Fair 2010 & Plaw and Fricker 2012, 348) Although most strikes are thoroughly researched and vetted, when the strikes go wrong or do not produce clear evidence of who was killed, the opposition is able to easily create propaganda against the U.S.

Success Rates

The use of UAVs to conduct Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), along with precision strikes has provided an increased capability for the U.S. One of the capabilities that aid all of these aspects of ISR is Full-Motion Video (FMV). FMV allows analysts to distinguish individuals on the ground as friend or foe and therefore minimize collateral damage

in attacks. The main UAVs used for strikes, the Predator and Reaper, also have multispectral targeting systems, which allow for automated tracking, fused images and multiple fields of view (Haffa and Datla 2014, 32). These capabilities have allowed for varying degrees of success in relation to striking terrorists, which are discussed below.

The UAV program has seen success, along with potential blowback from the citizens in the targeted countries. To analyze the success quantitatively, Bergen and Tiedemann developed a database, which uses open source reporting of every UAV strike reported in Pakistan from 2004 to the time of the study in 2011. The study utilized reliable accounts from both Western and Pakistani media agencies. The results show an increase in percentage of militants killed. During the Bush administration, 60 percent of the casualties were militants and during the Obama administration, 85 percent killed were militants (2011). These numbers are contrary to Hudson's numbers from a similar timeframe. In Pakistan, from 2002-2004, UAVs killed two HVIs and eleven total people, a 1:5 ratio. From 2005-2007, the ratio grew to 1:26 and 2008-2009 saw a ratio of 1:66. From 2009-2010, the ratio almost triples to 1:147 HVI deaths to total deaths (Hudson, Owens and Flannes 2011, 124-125). The main difference in analysis between these two studies is Hudson looked at HVIs, as opposed to just militants. This one difference gives the numbers a drastically different outcome and highlights the different stances in the academic community. The vast differences in analysis also illustrates the ease of making the numbers fit a specific point of view.

An additional aspect of casualty numbers is who is considered a militant or combatant. The 'guilt by association' approach considers all military-age males to be combatants, unless there is exonerating evidence to the contrary (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Center 2012, 116). When this piece of evidence is taken into account, the accuracy

of the numbers Bergen, Tiedemann and Hudson present above can be further questioned. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism found that in 346 UAV strikes, 2,562 to 3,325 were killed and 474 to 881 of these were confirmed civilians. 176 of these civilians were children (Baily 2013). These numbers are different from the one presented above, further showing how difficult obtaining accurate numbers for civilians versus military leaders killed in UAV strikes can be. Considering all military-age males combatants makes painting the numbers favorably for the United States fairly easy.

A difference needs to be noted between collateral damage and killing ‘innocent’ people who have been identified as combatants. The technology of UAVs has made actual collateral damage a minimal risk because of the enhanced ability to perform target discrimination. The slow speed of UAVs give them a significant advantage for target discrimination as opposed to the fast speed of a jet fighter. Additionally, manned fighters typically have one person who makes the decision regarding the possibility of collateral damage, where as UAVs have multiple people. One UAV about to strike has a pilot, a sensor operator, and at least one sensor analyst. The analyst is an intelligence professional with knowledge about the target culture, specifically tasked with looking for collateral damage concerns (Fowler 2014, 110). Very few children are killed because of the rigorous collateral damage rules UAV operators and analysts follow when engaging in strikes. According to the U.S. Government, less than 30 civilians were killed between 2008 and 2010, but according to Pakistani officials, 2009 alone saw more than 700 civilians killed (Bergen and Tiedemann 2011), again showing the difference perspective can have on skewing the numbers in either direction. The ‘innocent’ people who are killed mainly include people who have wrongly been identified as combatants by decision makers. The ‘guilt by association’ discussed above falls into this combatant category, but should not be considered

collateral damage because targeting of these individuals was deliberate.

Gathering accurate casualty numbers can also be very difficult because of the culture in areas being attacked. In Waziri, an area heavily hit by UAVs, families live in multi-family compounds with high walls, where the women and children generally live separately from the men. Additionally, photographing women or directly asking about women is unacceptable. Due to these cultural issues, many men may not have accurate knowledge of their neighbors, including how many people live in a neighboring compound (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Center 2012, 40). The result is possible inaccurate descriptions of UAV strike casualty numbers. Also, the terrorist organizations which are targeted have motive to report more civilian casualties than may be accurate. According to FarhatTaj, an expert on the UAV program in Pakistan,

The reason why these estimates about civilian ‘casualties’ in the US and Pakistani media are wrong is that after every attack the terrorists cordon off the area and no one, including the local villagers, is allowed to come even near the targeted place. The militants themselves collect the bodies, bury the dead and then issue the statement that all of them were innocent civilians. (Plaw and Fricker 2012, 350)

Even if the statistics of civilians being killed in UAV attacks are not accurate, negative public opinion and perception are more important to the effectiveness of the strategy than possible inaccurate data.

Public Opinion / Potential Blowback

The media and public opinion are drivers in policy and have a great effect on people’s actions. In the last decade, technology has allowed for an increase in speed and accessibility of information. Lethal UAV strikes are a hot topic both in the Middle East where they are taking place and in the United States. “Media Coverage of the Drone Program” provides an in-depth quantitative and qualitative study into the media stories about UAVs. This study found media

coverage of UAV strikes doubled from 2009 to 2012, specifically in the U.S. in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Time* magazine, and *The Washington Post*. There has even been an app, Drone +, created to follow UAV strikes in Pakistan (McKelvey 2012). Although the numbers have drastically increased, the subject is still difficult to report accurately on due to the classification of the missions and the restrictions placed by civilians in Washington on press coverage of the program. Phrases journalists choose to use when describing the UAV program and strikes can sway the public's opinion drastically one way or the other. The reporting started out fairly positive, showing how the UAV program allowed for a smaller U.S. military footprint overseas, allowed for extremely precise strikes and kept the operators safe. From 2009 to 2011, civilian casualties rose and Pakistanis became more vocal in their opposition. In 2011, the tone of the reporting shifted to be much more skeptical about the program's success (2012). The public became more aware of the moral issues surrounding the UAV program, and have increased questions to the government about practices and laws regarding the program.

In Pakistan, the knowledge of UAVs has also increased during recent years. Polling data from 2010 showed only 35 percent of Pakistanis were aware of the U.S. UAV program. Of those aware, one third thought the strikes were necessary to defend their country from extremism, one third thought the strikes were not necessary, and half thought the strikes were occurring without the approval of the Pakistani government (Fair, Kaltenthaler and Miller 2014, 3-4). These statistics show how truly uninformed the Pakistani people as a whole were in 2010 on the subject of UAVs. This number has increased with the expansion of media coverage on the topic. Much of the media coverage in Pakistan is very negative, especially towards the U.S. leadership who order the attacks. In 2013, President Obama gave a counterterrorism address and

defended the use of UAVs. The President summarized new guidelines for using UAVs only against targets posing an imminent threat to the U.S. and only when there is a near-certainty civilian deaths will be avoided (DeYoung and Miller 2013). The general public reacted strongly to the address. Missing in the speech was any mention of consulting the Pakistani government about any strikes to take place in the sovereign nation. The Pakistani foreign ministry commented on the subject, “The government of Pakistan has consistently maintained that the drone strikes are counter-productive, entail loss of innocent civilian lives, have human rights and humanitarian implications and violate the principles of national sovereignty.” (BBC 2013) Pakistan may support UAV strikes privately; however, the official statements of the government are against the strikes, which shows what the Pakistani government thinks is important to the Pakistani people.

Potential impacts on civilian lives from lethal UAV use are relevant for many reasons and leads into why there is significant risk of blowback. The article “Living under drones” examines many of the potential impacts of the U.S. UAV strike practices including the impact on civilians’ willingness to rescue victims and provide medical assistance, property damage and economic hardship impacts on civilians, mental health impacts, impacts on educational opportunities, impacts on civilians’ willingness to attend funerals and impacts on community trust (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Center 2012, 74-103). These impacts should be taken into account when UAV strikes are considered for use. The strikes can also impact the psyche of those living where strikes occur most often. In areas where strikes occur very often, people often get ‘anticipatory anxiety,’ which means the citizens are constantly worried about when the next attack will happen (Bailey 2013). Part of the purpose of the UAV strategy is to force terrorists to always worry about being struck by a UAV and change their

behavior accordingly, due to the fear of a strike. The purpose is not to make innocent civilians constantly worried they will be struck for no reason. While this worry may act as a deterrent for some civilians, the larger impact is a hate for the American government and people. Each of these potential impacts on civilian lives helps reveal why public opinion on UAV strikes is negative in the areas of operation.

The use of UAVs to strike high-level members of al-Qa'ida, the Taliban or other religious separatist terrorist groups has not had the effect the U.S. laid out in the Counterterrorism Strategy. McDonnell's compilation of empirical data concluded that targeting these groups is ineffective and generally allows the organizations to endure longer than those organizations whose leaders are not being targeted. There are many reasons these religious organizations do not respond as the U.S. planned, including because they consider themselves to be engaged in a struggle of good versus evil, they engage in violent acts to please their deity, and they consider themselves to not be constrained by secular laws or values (2012, 305-309). Members of these religious, separatist terrorist groups may see the leader's killing as the leader being a martyr for the cause, which makes the organizations stronger and more deadly. This reaction is contrary to the reaction the strikes are meant to create, which is to discourage more acts of violence. An additional reason UAV strikes may not have the intended effect is the disparity of technology used in the fight. The U.S. uses superior technology in the highly advanced system of UAVs against combatants who fight with low, simple technology (2012, 308-309). The technological disparity can portray the U.S. as fighting in a cowardly manner, which further diminishes any positive effect UAV strikes have.

UAV strikes are used against high-level members of terrorist organizations, but are also used against low-level militants. Specifically targeting low-level militants can be counter-

productive in the long-term. Plaw and Fricker assert six arguments, claiming an extended campaign against lower level terrorists will be counter-productive. These reasons include strikes will likely intensify hostility and resentment, they can undermine any international legitimacy the UAV strike campaign has, the strikes are unlikely to significantly weaken the Taliban, UAV strikes are strategically not needed, and the strikes will likely instigate retaliations against the U.S. (2012). Plaw and Fricker's arguments support the hypothesis of this paper, but do not delve into the psychological reasons behind the public's reactions to continued UAV use in the Middle East.

Conclusion

There is extensive literature on the use of UAVs to strike terrorists; however, a gap in how their use will affect the counterterrorism strategy in the future exists. The 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism sets the stage for the rest of the literature, including legal aspects, success rates and public opinion/potential blowback. The most important factor in potential blowback is people's emotional reaction to the strikes.

Under the International Humanitarian Law and the Authorization for Use of Military Force, strikes by UAVs are allowed, as long as the target fits the profile of a legal combatant under these international and domestic laws. The target has to be a member of an organization currently involved in the conflict and has to pose a threat to life or property of the United States in order to be a legal target. The literature makes abundantly clear the use of UAVs to lethally strike targets is legal under both domestic and international law, but the target has to fit the correct profile. However, the ability to determine if an individual fits the profile is the difficult part of ensuring the strikes are legal.

UAVs offer distinct advantages in the precision strike realm, but the success rates are

mixed. Each piece of literature provides different numbers for how many HVIs, militants and innocent civilians have been killed at the hand of UAVs. The disparity comes from who the author of the article considers a legitimate target. Additionally, the details of UAV strikes are classified by the U.S. government, which makes getting accurate numbers difficult and increases reliance on personal accounts.

Media coverage of UAV lethal strikes has increased in recent years, leading to an increase in public opinion on the subject. This increase has occurred both in the United States and in the areas where the strikes are most prevalent. The coverage increase has led to increased scrutiny and therefore potential blowback against the strikes. Civilians in the FATA area of Pakistan have been significantly impacted in their daily lives, which has led to anticipatory anxiety about strikes. From an internal terrorist organization perspective, strikes on high level members may actually lead to a stronger organization, which will last longer because of the support the strikes drum up.

The largest gap in the literature is the effect UAV strikes will have on the long term U.S. counterterrorism strategy. The reasons the Strategy could be negatively affected are the negative public opinion and increased violence because of the strikes. Analyzing emotion and attitude political psychological theories will provide insight into how people react to actions such as UAV strikes. This analysis will help understand how the UAV strike policy and action will affect the U.S. counterterrorism strategy.

Theoretical Framework

The literature reviewed reveals some gaps in knowledge on the use of lethal UAVs. Many articles have been written about the legality, some on the success rates and public opinion, but there is a gap of research delving into the effect this strategy will have long-term on the U.S.

counterterrorism strategy. The approach used in this study will be a combination of emotion and attitude political psychology theories as they pertain to a person's behavior. This approach will provide insight into how people tend to respond to various situations, specifically to UAV strikes. The hypothesis to be tested is: The use of UAV strikes in the Middle East will have a negative impact on the U.S. counterterrorism strategy's success due to negative public opinion and increased violence in reaction to the strikes.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The U.S. counterterrorism strategy outlines the threat the United States faces from terrorist organizations in the Middle East. One of the tactics to counter this threat is the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to strike and kill high value individuals. The last decade has shown a dramatic increase in the number of UAV strikes along with an increase in public awareness and opinion about the use of UAVs in this way. UAV strikes can execute precision assaults, but can also provoke retaliatory attacks, and inadvertently act as a recruiting tool for terrorist organizations. The research question outlined in this paper will examine how the use of UAV strikes in the Middle East will affect the success of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy. This paper will examine the United States' lethal use of UAVs in the Middle East since 2001 and the positive and negative effects on its counterterrorism strategy. The focus will be on the U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy, legal aspects, success rates, and public opinion/potential blowback of using UAVs to lethally strike high value targets. The hypothesis to be tested states: The use of UAV lethal strikes in the Middle East will have a negative impact on the U.S. counterterrorism strategy's success due to negative public opinion and increased violence in reaction to the strikes. The literature review allowed for the examination of the variables stated in the hypothesis, along with the variable of legal considerations.

Research Design

This study will analyze the independent variables of UAV strikes and legal considerations and how they affect the dependent variables of violence in reaction to strikes, public opinion, and in the end, potential counterterrorism policy success. The dependent

variables will be examined through the lenses of attitude and emotion political psychological theories in order to understand how people psychologically should respond to the UAV strikes. The political psychological theory of attitude states that attitudes are “an organized set of beliefs, persisting over time, which is useful in explaining the individual response to tendencies” (Cottam, Dietz-Uhler and Mastors 2010, 59). Attitude and behavior are normally linked; however, studies have shown a person does not always behave in accordance with his or her attitudes. Analyzing the dependent variables of violence in reaction to strikes and public opinion through the lens of attitude will take into account people’s likelihood to behave in accordance with their attitudes. Emotion is linked to attitude and can influence decision-making and behavior as well. Emotion is defined as “affective states that are more precisely labeled, such as anger, hatred, fear, love and respect” (2010, 50). The dependent variable of violence in reaction to strikes is likely to have a strong connection to emotion, while public opinion is likely to have a strong link to attitude. Once each dependent variable has been examined from the psychological perspective, the results, in conjunction with research already conducted through the literature review will provide the information needed in order to prove or disprove the hypothesis.

The best model to test the hypothesis is a qualitative one because there is limited unbiased quantitative information about the subject. Qualitative research can be used to take very detailed information and generalize the information (Trochim 2006). The topic of UAV strikes in the Middle East inherently involves the detailed information about each strike, how citizens in the countries of operation have reacted, and the impact on targeted terrorist organizations. This detailed information needs to be generalized in order to understand the long-term affects UAV strikes will have on the U.S. counterterrorism strategy. Secondary research will be exclusively used because there is ample information on the topic. Additionally, access to affected people in

the Middle East is a limiting factor for this study. Primary research, including interviews with those in the Middle East and experts on the subject are not necessary for this paper because an extensive body of literature, which includes interviews already exists. Future studies could include primary research, especially because this topic is quickly evolving. Secondary quantitative research will be used to show general trends, but primary research of this kind will not be completed. The quantitative research on this topic has proven to be very biased and unreliable due to source reliability and classification issues.

The best qualitative approach for this topic will be through phenomenology, and will use content analysis of text documents through a case study. According to Trochim, “Phenomenology is a school of thought that emphasizes a focus on people’s subjective experiences and interpretations of the world.” (2006) How people interpret the world is very important in this research because interpretations can predict how the general public will react to certain situations, which in this case is UAV strikes. Understanding how people in the Middle East have reacted and will react to UAV strikes will help prove or disprove the hypothesis. Content analysis will allow for thematic analysis of the research. The research is broken up into the four main themes of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy, legal aspects, success rates and public opinion/potential blowback; which will help in the analysis of the independent and dependent variables.

The following describes how the research will be conducted. First, a baseline for how people react to strikes and how effective the strikes have been will be created. To create the baseline, this paper will analyze how people in the Middle East and in the U.S. have reacted to UAV strikes through the lens of attitude and emotion psychological themes. This analysis will provide a baseline for how U.S. and Middle Easterners should be expected to react to the strikes.

Then the effectiveness of the strikes in relation to U.S. counterterrorism policy will be analyzed. After these baselines have been created, predictions will be made. The reaction baseline will be used to predict how U.S. and Middle Easterners will react to strikes in the future. Then the predicted reactions will be applied to the counterterrorism strategy effectiveness baseline to assess future counterterrorism effectiveness. The hypothesis has two parts to be tested. The first part of the hypothesis states that the use of UAV lethal strikes in the Middle East will have a negative impact on the U.S. counterterrorism strategy's success. The second part of the hypothesis states that the reason for the negative impact is due to negative public opinion and increased violence in reaction to the strikes. The result of the above strategy will prove or disprove the effectiveness part of the hypothesis. The second part of the hypothesis will be assessed based off of the dependent variable analysis.

An extensive literature review relating to the effects of lethal UAV use in the Middle East will be accomplished. Additionally, the United States counterterrorism strategy will be analyzed in order to fully understand how the strategy will be affected by the lethal use of UAVs. The primary data to be used in this paper will be written documents. The cases to be studied will be chosen according to how they fall into one of the main categories of literature on the subject. These categories include the U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy, legal aspects, success rates, and public opinion / potential blowback. Additionally, articles written from peer-reviewed or governmental sources will primarily be considered in order to ensure accuracy and accountability in the research. The cases studied are a mix of quantitative and qualitative studies in order to analyze all sides of the issue. Qualitative studies underscore how biased and inaccurate numbers about UAV strikes in the Middle East can be. Although the numbers vary widely between articles, general patterns can be extracted in order to provide overarching themes about lethal

UAV strikes. Quantitative studies show how strongly the public, both in the United States and in the countries where UAVs operate, feel about and react to the UAV strikes. This public opinion in the U.S. and the Middle East, more than the actual numbers, will affect the success of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy.

Limitations of the study include accurate, un-biased data on the strike victims' affiliations and intent. Family members and friends of victims are more likely to not consider the victim a terrorist or legal target. Also, where most strikes are being carried out, the culture can hinder knowing one's neighbors with much detail, which leads to even less credible numbers on strikes. An additional limitation is the detailed information about the strikes themselves are classified, making complete data on the subject unavailable. There is no way to get around the classification issue, but the way this study is designed will limit the affect classification will have on testing the hypothesis. This study will take a more generalized approach to how humans will psychologically react to strikes.

In order to answer the research question and test the hypothesis, a qualitative study will be conducted using content analysis of text documents. This study will use qualitative and quantitative secondary sources. The dependent variables of violence in reaction to strikes and public opinion will be analyzed through the lens of attitude and emotion psychological theories in order to set a baseline of how people react to UAV strikes. This analysis will help predict how the U.S. counterterrorism strategy will be affected by the use of UAV strikes in the Middle East, and in the end, either prove or disprove the hypothesis.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

The United States National Strategy for Counterterrorism provides a baseline of the terrorism threat the U.S. faces and the strategy to eliminate the threat. One of the prominent vehicles used to counter the threat of terrorism from the Middle East is the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to lethally strike terrorists. The following analysis answers the research question: How will the use of UAV strikes in the Middle East affect the success of the United States' counterterrorism strategy?

The literature reviewed proves the use of UAV strikes in the Middle East is founded in legal documentation. The lethal use of UAVs is legally not any different than other weapon systems the U.S. employs. UAVs have to follow the same laws as surface-to-air missiles, fighter aircraft and any other aerial vehicle used to drop a weapon (Vogel 2013). Applicable laws include domestic and international authorities. Both domestic and international law allows for the use of UAV strikes under specific guidelines. Domestically, the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) authorizes the president to use necessary and appropriate force against those responsible for the September 11 attacks (Guiora 2012). Additionally, international law supports the program. The International Humanitarian Law allows for a country to carry out strikes if they are conducted in accordance with the principles of humanity, distinction, military necessity and proportionality (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Center 2012). As long as the guidelines supplied by these laws are followed, which the U.S. government claims is occurring, the lethal use of UAVs is legal by both domestic and international law.

UAV strikes have been successful in eliminating many targets. The numbers outlined in news articles and scholarly journals widely vary in accounting for civilians versus militants versus high value targets killed in strikes. Accurate numbers are less important than the public opinion the reported numbers create. In order to understand future implications to the effectiveness of the U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy, U.S and foreign reactions were analyzed through the political psychological lenses of attitude and emotion. The reaction baselines were used to understand future expectations of U.S. and foreign citizens' reactions. These expectations were then applied to the U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy to predict the future effectiveness and success of the strategy.

Attitude Lens

A person's attitude is an organized set of beliefs that persist over time. These beliefs can explain how an individual will respond to various situations (Cottam, Dietz-Uhler and Mastors 2010). Attitudes are an important piece to understanding how the public will respond to UAV strikes over time and how this response will affect the counterterrorism strategy. Both U.S citizen and foreign attitudes are important contributors to the overall success or failure of the strategy.

U.S. public awareness about UAV strikes has increased dramatically over the last decade. An increase in opinion has accompanied the increase in awareness. The U.S. population has gone through a few notable changes of publicly acceptable opinions over the last few hundred years. These changes include internationalism, overt racial bigotry and most recently, sexual equality. The Converse-McGuire Model shows that for each of these issues, the attitude changes were linked to political involvement in such a way that people in the middle range of involvement had their attitudes most easily changed. Those with the strongest involvement and

those with the least political involvement maintained their preferences (Zaller 1987). This same principle can be applied to UAV strikes. Both the public, which is largely involved, and those who are hardly involved in UAV debate and knowledge will be the least likely to stray from their current position on UAV strikes. The general public, who is moderately involved will sway the easiest. Reporting on the subject started off fairly positive, outlining many reasons the UAV program was a good idea. After 2009, these reports became more negative as civilian casualties rose and Pakistanis were more vocal in their opposition. By 2011, the reporting tone had shifted to be more skeptical about the overall program's success (McKelvey 2012). Current negative reporting and public opinion offers a baseline of negative attitude views towards the UAV program from U.S. citizens.

As UAV strikes continue to increase, the reporting will do the same. The trends show reporting on the program will continue to be negative, unless there is a major change in the UAV strike policy. Public knowledge about the strikes will also increase with more readily available literature and articles on the subject. The 'middle range' will see the most change in attitude according to the Converse-McGuire Model. Public opinion in the United States will continue down a negative path regarding UAV strikes, which will lead to a lack of popular support for the UAV lethal strike policy as part of the U.S. National Strategy for Counterterrorism.

U.S. perception and attitude is important in shaping policy; however, the attitude of citizens in the areas the U.S. operates is also essential to analyze. In Pakistan, one of the most prevalent areas of U.S. UAV operation, the knowledge of strikes has increased in recent years. The potential impacts strikes have on day-to-day lives of the local population is significant. These impacts include property damage, mental health impacts, and the willingness to help

injured people and to attend funerals (International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Center 2012). This disruption to the local populous' lives results in increased anxiety. If the citizens are constantly worried about the next attack, and this stress affects their daily lives, they are considered to have 'anticipatory anxiety' (Bailey 2013). The general public who only see the negative impact UAV strikes have on civilian life will have their attitudes about the subject solidified over time. As both strikes and negative reporting increase, the attitudes will form to see UAV strikes and U.S. involvement as destructive and unhelpful. Currently, half of those who know about the U.S. UAV program believe the strikes are executed without Pakistani government approval and one third think the strikes are not necessary (Fair 2014). Although currently the U.S. is allowed to fly UAVs over Pakistan, country disapproval could hinder this ability in the future. Predator and Reaper effective use hinges on the U.S. securing air supremacy or approval from the operating area's government. Without this approval the UAVs could be shot down or an escort of fighters would be necessary to facilitate operations. The attitudes of citizens in countries where UAV lethal strike operation occur are important to the success of U.S. counterterrorism policy. Negative attitudes from those citizens will hinder successful UAV operations and have a negative impact on the United States counterterrorism strategy.

U.S. public opinion and public opinion in the areas UAVs operate in when analyzed through an attitude lens yield similar results. Both areas have seen an increase in reporting on UAV strikes, and in both cases, the reporting has been increasingly negative. This reporting provides a baseline of negative attitude and perception of success from both U.S. citizens and foreign citizens. These trends are likely to persist and each area will see a continued increase in reporting and an increase in negativity. Using the Converse-McGuire Model to project public

support, the majority of citizens' attitudes in both the U.S. and the countries of operation will become progressively negative and therefore unsupportive of UAV strikes. Both U.S. citizens and foreigners' opinions can shape U.S. policy.

Emotion Lens

A person's emotion is an affective state. These states can be labeled as anger, hatred, fear, love or respect (Cottam, Dietz-Uhler and Mastors 2010). Emotion can be a strong tie to motivation, which can shape policy. When a topic in a political issue is important to someone, he or she will determine the topic's evaluative meaning. The resulting evaluative meaning is emotion (Leach 2010). In the case of UAV strikes, people can feel very strongly for or against the use of UAVs, depending on their lived experiences. Citizens in the U.S. may feel anger or fear towards the terrorists UAV strikes are targeting. These citizens' emotions may motivate them to support the strikes. In a targeted country, however, citizens may feel anger or fear towards the UAVs because the aircraft could strike the citizens at any time. The citizens' emotions in the targeted countries may motivate them to feel strongly against the strike policy, and against the U.S. for employing the aircraft.

The popularity of the U.S. war in the Middle East can be a measure for public support of the UAV strike program. When the U.S. first went to war in the early 2000s, Americans were virtually unanimously behind the war. The percentage who believed the war was worth fighting dropped to 56 percent in 2007 and dropped further to 44 percent by 2010 (The Washington Post 2010). The war has drawn out into the longest war in U.S. history. With few tangible results, trillions of dollars spent and U.S. soldier's lives lost, Americans no longer overwhelmingly support the war. The emotions Americans felt in the beginning of the war, namely fear, anger and hatred for the terrorists who attacked the U.S., allowed for great support of UAV strike

programs. These emotions have slowly changed as the memory of 9/11 fades and trillions of dollars are still being spent in a distant war.

Events such as the Islamic State (IS) beheading U.S. and allied prisoners can spike the emotional response of the country, but only briefly. In August 2014, U.S. citizen James Foley was beheaded on video by a member of IS. Associated phrases became ‘trending’ terms on social media including #ISIS, #Islamic State and #James Foley (Parkinson 2014). Trending phrases are an indication of how much the users of social media care about a certain topic and the amount of time media outlets will focus on those topics. Six months and multiple beheadings later, IS beheaded 21 Egyptian men at one time in a similar video to the one published showing James Foley’s death. Following the beheading of these men, the morning news shows of NBC, CBS and ABC covered the story for a combined total of less than five minutes in 6 hours of combined air time. Over the same weekend, Saturday Night Live (SNL) broadcasted the 40th anniversary show and #SNL40 was a trending topic. SNL coverage on the same morning news shows totaled over 20 minutes (Concha 2015 and Philbin 2015). The public outrage of the first beheading compared to six months later highlights how American’s emotional response to terrorist acts, the war in the Middle East and counterterrorism policy waivers depending on media coverage.

U.S. emotional reaction to continued UAV strikes in the Middle East is ambivalent at best. However, for known terrorists like Mohammed Emwazi, dubbed ‘Jihadi John’ in the press, public support exists for UAV strikes. Jihadi John is credited as the masked man in the IS beheading videos discussed above. Mannus Ranstorp, a Swedish National Defense College terrorism specialist, stated on Jihadi John’s identity reveal, “It’s quite important for families of the victims...to know there is one particular person....who will live for the rest of his life

knowing that every day he will face a possible drone attack.” (Katz 2015) This statement helps exhibit the public’s appreciation for UAV strikes, when used to very deliberately target a terrorist. The baseline for U.S. emotional reaction to strikes is mixed. When used against deliberate, known terrorists, the reaction is positive; however, when the media reports of collateral damage caused by UAV strikes, the reaction is negative. The expectation of reaction to further strikes is positive if the strikes are deliberate and against known terrorists. Reported civilian casualties, however, whether accurate or not, will continue to create negative public opinion in the United States.

In areas where UAV strikes are common, a new morbid humor has begun. In Waziristan, residents use the phrase, “I will drone you” (Shah 2012, 61). Comics depicting UAVs and UAV graphics on local news shows are commonplace. Citizens in countries where UAVs operate have strong emotional reactions to the aircraft flying overhead. At one funeral of two citizens who were killed in UAV strikes, the crowd chanted, “Any friend of America is a traitor” (Palmer 2013). This type of chanting exhibits how the emotions of anger, hatred and fear affect the population. The citizens of Pakistan felt strongly enough about the constant UAV flights that Pakistan’s high court ordered a ruling in 2013, which made UAV strikes illegal in the country. The court issued this order to Pakistan’s government, “You have to give a stern warning to the United States, to shut down the drones, and if you don’t, you are within your rights under international law to shoot the drones down.” (2013) Pakistan shooting United States’ UAVs down is unlikely; however, this ruling illustrates the strong emotion the country feels about unmanned aircraft and the effect a common emotion can have on changing a country’s policy.

Emotional reaction from the perspective of the terrorist organizations, which are targeted

in the strikes results in an increase in violence and strengthening of the terrorist organization. McDonnell's research shows targeting religious separatist terrorist groups leads to the organization enduring longer. The members consider themselves to be in a fight against evil and do not consider themselves constrained by secular laws or values, and therefore engage in violent acts to please their deity (2012). Additionally, UAV use presents a technological disparity between superior, advanced systems and the combatants who use low, simple technology. This disparity, along with the reaction from religious separatist terrorist organizations, results in UAV strikes creating the opposite effect than intended. The strategy ends up strengthening terrorist organizations, making the groups more deadly and creating more violence.

In the U.S., emotional response to UAV strikes is dependent on what is in the news at the time. Positive feelings towards the use of UAVs will spike when a new threat is actively portrayed in the news, and will decrease over time as people get used to the threat or terrorist acts. Although these emotional spikes will occur, the general trend is an increasing negative feeling towards UAV strikes. In the countries of operation, emotional response is strong against the U.S. and the country's use of UAVs. The emotional response has been strong enough to change Pakistani laws to outlaw UAV strikes. Similar to the attitude findings, without UAV policy change, the emotional response expectations are likely to see an increase in negativity from both the U.S. and foreign citizens. The emotional response from the terrorist organizations themselves are also likely to increase violent responses.

U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy

Part of the U.S. counterterrorism policy has been to win the hearts and minds of those in the Middle East in order to quell terrorism. UAV strikes in the Middle East can have a counter

effect to this strategy. President Bush secretly obtained permission in 2006 from then Pakistani President Musharraf to use UAVs in the FATA in order to kill high level al-Qa'ida targets. The next Pakistani President Zardari secretly told the CIA Director to "kill the leaders" in 2008 (Plaw and Fricker 2012, 349). The continued allowance of UAVs in Pakistan means Pakistan's sovereignty has not been infringed upon. However, also in 2008, President Zardari referenced the UAV strikes in a public interview, stating, "it's undermining my sovereignty, and it's not helping win the war on the hearts and minds of the people." (CBS 2008) The dichotomy of President Zardari's words and both his actions and his predecessor's actions illustrate the importance leadership has placed on the appearance of control and the want to be in line with the general public's opinion. Also, this interview was prior to the dramatic upsurge in number of strikes executed in Pakistan, which have only strengthened the public's negative opinion as exhibited by the outlawing of UAV lethal strikes in 2013. The U.S. needs either support from the leadership of any sovereign nation UAVs are operated in, or the U.S. needs air supremacy to safely operate the aircraft. Foreign leadership can give permission to operate in sovereign airspace in private, which is important for legal reasons, but does not help improve public opinion. Pakistani leadership understands the country's emotional and attitude response to U.S. UAV use and has responded by publicly denouncing the U.S. Lack of open public support from the leadership of countries the U.S. operates UAV strikes in undermines the U.S. counterterrorism policy.

In both the U.S. and in countries where the U.S. operates UAVs, citizens' attitude and emotional response has changed over the past decade. The attitude baseline is an increasing trend of both awareness and negativity. In the U.S., the public media has changed the tone of articles from the positive aspects of UAV operations to the numbers of civilians and children

killed in strikes and the lack of perceived legal and governmental oversight. In the Middle East, the general populous' lives have been affected and citizens live in a world of increased anxiety. The emotional baseline is slightly different from the attitude baseline in the U.S. Citizens of the United States tend to change emotion depending on what is hot in the news, which makes the media very important in how Americans view UAV strikes. General trending shows an overall decrease in U.S. citizen support for the war and its tactics. In the Middle East, emotional response to UAV strikes is stronger than in the U.S. and has changed policy and laws. Without a change in U.S. policy, emotional response in the Middle East will continue down a negative path, and most likely put further pressure on local governments to change the way the U.S. conducts operations. Additionally, emotional response from the targeted secular religious terrorist organizations has increased violence and will continue to strengthen those organizations.

Attitude and emotional baselines in both the U.S. and the Middle East allow for predicted reactions to future UAV strikes. The overall trends show that both attitude and emotional responses from U.S. citizens and Middle Eastern citizens have increased in negativity towards UAV strikes over the past decade. Without a change in U.S. UAV policy, these trends will continue and negative views will increase.

The hypothesis states: The use of UAV lethal strikes in the Middle East will have a negative impact on the U.S. counterterrorism strategy's success due to negative public opinion and increased violence in reaction to the strikes. The analysis above proves the strikes in the Middle East will negatively affect the counterterrorism strategy. The variables of violence in reaction to strikes and public opinion have a negative impact on the potential counterterrorism policy success.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The United States was attacked at home on September 11, 2001. This day changed the U.S. and how the country conducted operations in the Middle East. The attacks made the U.S. public support the country's counterterrorism focus on al Qaeda and the terrorist organization's allies. In the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism, the United States still considered al Qaeda as the most significant terrorist threat. In order to defeat this enemy, the U.S. has employed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to conduct Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) mission and to lethally strike terrorists. The first UAV strike in Pakistan was conducted on June 18, 2004 and began a large campaign in the country, which has evolved drastically over the last decade.

UAVs offer distinct advantages on the battlefield over traditional ISR and fighter aircraft. UAVs can remain on station for over 20 hours at a time, which can allow for pattern of life establishment and better fidelity on the target's identity. The armament Predators and Reapers are equipped with allow the aircraft to hunt terrorists and execute precision attacks. Additionally, the pilot is kept out of harm's way and the involvement of multiple intelligence personnel can reduce collateral damage from strikes. The reduced chance of collateral damage makes UAVs a choice weapon in areas where the U.S. has air supremacy.

UAVs can also present some disadvantages including the provocation of retaliatory attacks and negative public opinion if any civilians are killed or are reportedly killed in a UAV strike. The pilot's location thousands of miles away can present a perception of disproportional warfare. Any resulting collateral damage is seen as unacceptable because of the safety of the

pilot and any associated intelligence personnel. Reported civilian casualties drive a worsening radicalization of militants and an increased terrorist threat.

The increase in violence after strikes, the strengthening of terrorist organizations and the rise in public opinion about UAV strikes raised the research question: How will the use of UAV strikes in the Middle East affect the success of the United States' counterterrorism strategy? This research question was examined and answered by testing the following hypothesis: The use of UAV strikes in the Middle East will have a negative impact on the U.S. counterterrorism strategy's success due to negative public opinion and increased violence in reaction to the strikes.

This study analyzed the independent variables of UAV strikes and legal considerations and how the dependent variables of violence in reaction to strikes, public opinion, and potential counterterrorism policy success affect the independent variables. The dependent variables were analyzed through the political psychological theories of attitude and emotion to provide an understanding of how U.S. citizens, foreign citizens, and targeted terrorist organization members should be expected to respond to UAV strikes. A qualitative study was conducted through a phenomenology approach and used content analysis of text documents to analyze these variables.

Through the literature review, the legal aspects of the U.S.'s use of UAVs to strike terrorists in the Middle East were analyzed. The argument that UAV strikes are legal was found to be true. Under the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) of 2001, the strikes are legal domestically if the correct constraints are adhered to. Under International Humanitarian Law, as long as the strikes follow the principles of humanity, distinction, military necessity and proportionality, strikes are legal internationally. Therefore, as long as the strikes follow the

conditions of the laws, under both domestic and international law, UAV strikes are considered legal.

After the legal aspects were analyzed, a baseline for how citizens in the United States and the Middle East have reacted to strikes and how effective the strikes have been was created. The results show from both an attitude and emotional perspective, generally U.S. and foreign citizens have a negative perspective of the strikes. In the U.S., the emotional perspective does differ depending current news stories. With the exception of times high-visibility terrorists are in the news, U.S. citizens have a negative emotional response to UAV use. Additionally, targeted terrorist organization members have an emotional response, which creates an increase in violence and strengthens the terrorist organization. This analysis provided a baseline for how U.S. and Middle Easterners can be expected to react to strikes.

Next, the effectiveness of the strikes in relation to U.S. counterterrorism policy was analyzed. This analysis showed factual numbers are almost impossible to acquire; however, the accuracy of the numbers are much less important than the public's reaction to any reported numbers. After these baselines were created, predictions were made and applied to the counterterrorism strategy effectiveness baseline to assess future counterterrorism effectiveness. With regards to attitude, both U.S. and foreign reactions are assessed to follow the current trend of increasing negativity towards the U.S. UAV program. For emotional responses, U.S. citizens will respond depending on what is in the news at the current time. Overall, the emotional response trend is negative, but will have a positive spike when the news shows UAVs targeting known terrorists or when an egregious terrorist act is reported in the news. Emotional trends in the area of UAV operations will continue to be largely negative due to the fear and anger most citizens feel towards the strikes. Targeted terrorist organizations will continue to

strengthen and retaliate against UAV strikes. This analysis of variables culminates in proving the hypothesis correct. The U.S. counterterrorism strategy effectiveness will be hurt due to lethal UAV strikes in the Middle East. The reason for the negative impact is due to negative public opinion and increased violence in reaction to the strikes.

Study limitations included finding un-biased data on strike victims and classification issues. Due to culture issues, differing definitions of civilian or combatant casualty and propaganda reasons, accurate casualty information is scarce. Family members and friends of the victims, along with terrorist organizations are more likely to consider the victims as innocent and report these biased numbers to the press. In order to not allow these factors to affect the testing of the hypothesis, trends were generalized and many articles were taken into consideration. The study took a generalized approach to how humans psychologically react to strikes. Until UAV strike data is declassified, classification of information will be an issue for this line of research. An additional study limitation is the currency of the National Strategy for Counterterrorism. This study used the most recent strategy, which was published in 2011. At the time a new strategy is released, this research will need to be reevaluated and re-vectored depending on changes between the two documents.

An extensive literature library exists on the United States' use of UAVs to lethally strike terrorists; however, a gap existed of how UAV use will affect the U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the future. This research provided analysis for how the U.S. counterterrorism strategy will be affected by the current use of UAVs in the Middle East and provided the analysis through a unique lens of the political psychological theories of attitude and emotion. The understanding of psychological implications for U.S. strategy is as important as analyzing the numbers alone. The success of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy incorporates more than just the number of

successful strikes and high value targets eliminated. Psychological effects on U.S. citizens, those living under the constant fear of UAV strikes and the terrorist members who are targeted, all have relevant repercussions on the overall strategy. These groups have the power to change policy, as seen in Pakistan in 2013. The psychological effects the groups feel are important considerations during any UAV strike policy assessment.

Future avenues for research still exist. This research did not analyze how best to change policy in order for the United States counterterrorism strategy to be successful in the future. Additional research into what methods will ensure a more positive attitude and emotional reaction to U.S. actions is necessary in order to create a counterterrorism policy that will be successful in the long term against terrorists and will further the U.S. goal of winning the hearts and minds of the citizens in the Middle East. UAVs present a great capability; however, they need to be employed in a way that does not result in negative attitude and emotional responses from U.S. and Middle Eastern citizens. Retaliatory attacks from targeted terrorists organizations may be unavoidable in this war; however, research into how to minimize these attacks is still needed.

The United States has taken to utilizing technological advances in the current conflict. In order to carry out the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism, the U.S. is employing UAVs in the Middle East. Although these aircraft offer many advantages to operators and intelligence personnel, the use of UAVs to lethally strike targets in the Middle East will ultimately have a negative impact on the U.S. counterterrorism strategy's success due to negative public opinion and increased violence in reaction to the strikes.

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