



Akhter, M., Roberts, S., Hall, K., Massaro, V. A. and Shaw, I. G.R. (2018) Reading Ian Shaw's Predator Empire: Drone Warfare and Full Spectrum Dominance. *Political Geography*, 62, pp. 216-222. (doi:[10.1016/j.polgeo.2017.09.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2017.09.010))

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Deposited on: 20 October 2017

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Review Forum: Predator Empire: Drone Warfare and Full Spectrum Dominance, Ian G.R. Shaw. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis (2016).

Majed Akhter, Sue Roberts, Vanessa Massaro, Katharine Hall, and Ian Shaw

This forum draws on an “Author meets Critics” session organized around Ian Shaw’s *Predator Empire: Drone Warfare and Full Spectrum Dominance*. The session was held during the American Association of Geographers’ conference in Boston in 2017. The reviewers, all US-based political geographers, share an admiration for the book’s bold engagements with drone war as symptomatic of a larger socio-technological process of civilizational enclosure. The reviewers also voiced their views on the limitations of the book, especially in terms of its treatment of racial hierarchies and exclusions, the economic geography of the drone industry, and the all-encompassing nature of what Shaw refers to as the “Predator Empire”.

Shaw characterizes the Predator Empire as “concept used to gather together and theorize the multiple military, policing, and surveillance apparatuses that coordinate an increasingly dronified war on terror”, with a focus on how this war is carried out by the U.S. security state (p.6). Predator Empire, posits Shaw, manifests along four distinct axes. These are a “mode of state power (policing), a military strategy (predation), an archetypal technology of remote surveillance (the Predator and Predator B drone), and a geographical scale (the planetary)” (ibid). Shaw elegantly draws these four threads of Predator Empire together to diagnose and theorize a reconfigured socio-technological terrain that both enables and enhances the geographical (as well as the psychological and affective) reach of the U.S. security state.

Predator Empire weaves discussion of philosophical ideas into a clear and compelling narrative that addresses the ethnical-political implications of the invasive technologies of state control and violence. The introductory chapter is a theoretical review and reflection on technological civilization as a form of historical and ongoing enclosure. Chapter 1 explains the historical geographies and theoretical implications of the English enclosure movement and Chapter 2 recounts and analyzes the technological experiments and advances made by the US security state in Cold War Vietnam. Chapter 3 charts the globalization of the electronic battlefield pioneered in the jungles of Vietnam in the war on terror, while Chapter 4 is a sustained engagement with the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt, especially around the bureaucratic dimensions of state power and surveillance. Chapter 5 rounds out the book by drawing on urban theory to discuss policing as a form of internal pacification, with a focus on the context of the U.S. The geographical, historical, and theoretical range of these engagements support

Shaw's ambition of analyzing Predator Empire as a global and totalizing condition.

In what follows, three critics reflect on *Predator Empire*, with an eye towards identifying the openings created by the book for further research into the technological geopolitics of securitization, surveillance, and state power. Sue Roberts highlights Shaw's tendency to portray the Predator Empire in all-encompassing terms, to the point where there seems no room for constitutive differentiations in the analysis. Roberts also argues that despite Shaw's engagement with Marxism, there is a "relative neglect of the economic or political economic dimensions of Predator Empire". Vanessa Massaro draws on the feminist, postcolonial, and black radical traditions to highlight how Shaw's concerns are narrowly focused on the power relations of capital and class. Accounting for "technologies of difference beyond that of class" could allow Shaw to expose the "fragility of both masculinity and whiteness" that undergird the injustices and exclusions of capitalist modernity. Kate Hall draws on black feminist scholarship to elaborate on one of Shaw's central themes – the deeply politicized determination of what is on the "inside" of civilization, and the related question of who gets to count as fully human. In addition to the importance of technology in determining these boundaries, Hall urges greater attention to the constitutive role of "processes of racialization" in the history and present of capitalism. Thus, while Shaw examines the English enclosure as a historical precedent of violent enclosure, future research may shed greater light on the explicitly racialized dimensions of enclosure with a historical examination of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

As Shaw correctly identifies in his response to these three critics, a major issue undergirding many of the above critiques is a question about the concept of "Predator Empire" itself. What type of concept is Predator Empire, and what type of analytical work can we ask of it? Shaw seems to move between an understanding of Predator Empire as a recently emergent global condition versus one that is already firmly entrenched in our socio-technological landscape. Rather than getting caught up in a crassly empiricist response to this provocative category, I find it interesting to read Predator Empire as cautionary abstraction. This means that rather than describing the current configuration of world politics Predator Empire captures, in purposively stark terms, we might ask how technologies like militarized drones exert a technological imperative that pushes towards a specific trajectory of securitized state-formation. I take this to mean that the techno-political structures Shaw so carefully explains in the book, once in place, push state formation in a specific direction – the direction of the Predator Empire. These same structures also structurally limit alternate socio-technical arrangements not predicated on strategies of enclosure, dispossession, accumulation, and overall "full-spectrum dominance". It is therefore not necessary

to accord the Predator Empire suffocating omnipotence, dominance, or completion in order for the category to shed new and critical light on the geopolitical and ethical-political dynamics of mystified technologies like drones.

Even as he generously and productively engages these critiques, Shaw notes that the contributions of *Predator Empire* stand out clearer if juxtaposed to the proliferation of journalistic, juridical, activist, and geopolitical commentaries on the use of remotely piloted vehicles for the purposes of targeted surveillance and killing. In contrast to the technocratic, state-centric, and tactical character of this literature, Shaw's engagements are more centrally with the philosophical, existential, and civilizational implications of the ever-increasing technological capacity for surveillance and tracking that targets specific individuals and population groups.

Along with his reflections on the philosophical implications of drone war for the "human condition", another welcome contribution of the book lies in its style and grace. Constructing a message with the potential to proliferate a critical and materialist understanding of state violence beyond the confines of academia is one of Shaw's major commitments. To this end, he has also produced *Remote: A Documentary about Drones and Humans* that supplements the book and that has great pedagogical potential for a range of publics, especially students (<https://vimeo.com/222209662>).

I have no doubt that Shaw would be delighted if the book should spur further research on the materiality of state formation. But the book is written in a way that it has the potential to go beyond the research community to shape broader conceptions of the imbrications of war, policing, surveillance, and technologies of control. As such, Shaw's *Predator Empire* and *Remote* is a model for geographers who aim not only to reshape research agendas in their field, but also to engage broader and more diverse publics.

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This is an important book. In it, Ian Shaw considers the rise of drones as key technologies of state violence. He carefully identifies what is happening in the contemporary moment, and then draws out the precedents, meaning, and implications of current trajectories. The basic question Shaw is concerned with is posed early on in the book: “What does it mean for humans to exist in an era of dronified state violence?” (p. 5)

In terms of identifying the present moment, Shaw takes an historical approach, providing a detailed, yet readable, account of the various initiatives, programs, and plans that enabled the drone to become a key technology and weapon. To describe the contemporary situation, Shaw develops this idea of the Predator Empire. He writes: “Predator Empire is a concept used to describe the contemporary and future US national security state, an arrangement of military power, state violence and unprecedented surveillance technology” (p.241; see also p. 6).

And, in terms of the implications of Predator Empire, Shaw shows how it is a socio-technical formation that is connected to totalitarianism- a new type of totalitarianism characterized by social control (rather than discipline) and machine intensive state violence (rather than labor intensive). It is also a distinctively US empire.

One of this book’s major strengths is that Shaw is not afraid to draw out the big picture implications of life under Predator Empire. To do this, he builds on theorists such as Hannah Arendt – particularly to consider some of the frightening political implications, and on Peter Sloterdijk, to help understand how the drone can facilitate geopolitical enclosure of the skies, effectively saturating human life and imprisoning people in “sociopsychic spheres” (p.55). Nonetheless, there seemed to be some tension between parts of the book where the overarching depictions of the state of “humanity” and the discussion of all-encompassing planetary logics, seemed to risk losing sight of the geographies of Predator Empire.

In many parts of the book, Shaw does draw out the formative significance of the geographies of Predator Empire. For example, he delineates the key role of The Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, a region subjected to particularly intense US drone surveillance and strikes. Citing the traumatic effects of living under drones, and how everyday behavior is affected, Shaw shows how the “biopolitical logic of drone strikes, is not simply death, then: it is the ordering and policing of the lifeworld” (p. 126). Nonetheless, Shaw sees the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, and presumably now Yemen, as proving grounds for an evolving “topological empire in which space is unilaterally erased by technics” (p. 129).

Claiming that “[t]he world is being remade into a battlespace” (p.112), though, can be a generalization that glosses over the highly differentiated human experiences of state drone violence. Likewise, thinking of the “dronification of the human condition” in the singular may be too abstract (p. 28), to acknowledge, and also to consider the significance of, the changing geographical intensities of drone deployment around the world.

Shaw writes of the human condition under drones, as characterized by “anxious, hypersecured, atomized individuals: soothed and yet ever distressed by the buzz of police robots swarming the skies” (p. 28). But this is not a generic human condition, is it? As Shaw’s own emphasis on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan reveals, there is an enormous, and highly significant, difference between life under drones in that part of the planet, and life under drones in the US, say. By invoking the language of empire, Shaw recognizes that the asymmetries, the inequities, and the power logics, built on historic spatialities of empire and hegemony, while enabled by new technologies, are still significant, and even constitutive or formative, of the vastly different human conditions (plural). And, of course, overly abstracting or generalizing doesn’t just occlude the spatiality of present-day trajectories, it also misses acknowledging and analyzing the important multiple racialized geographies at the heart of Predator Empire.

Having said this, Shaw does emphasize that Predator Empire is itself characterized by a spatio-organizational shift from “Baseworld” to “Droneworld.” As drones change the ways wars are fought, Droneworld relies on a different kind of spatial organization. Fewer giant airbases, for example, and many more smaller distributed bases. Shaw writes of how a “constellation of bases forms the skeleton of the Predator Empire, providing the material infrastructure of targeted killing” (p. 129). Shaw’s overview of what is happening in Africa is extremely interesting in this regard. He points out that there are a few key bases in the region, with multiple smaller facilities, networked together in an “architecture of hubs and spokes, of drones and special forces” under construction, and that this “aims at eradicating the tyranny of distance and brings the dangerous splinterlands of the continent under the watchful eyes of robots” (p. 141). This architecture is supported by communications infrastructure, from satellites to fiber-optic cables, from roads to quays, and represents considerable investment. The “killnet” or, in other words, “the multiple, dispersed, and violent infrastructures that have snapped together in the Predator Empire” (p. 195) is simultaneously thus a technological, geopolitical, and geoeconomic phenomenon.

This book’s focus is resolutely on the technological (though Shaw prefers to write of “technicity”) and the political. To a degree, the “economic” is treated as a separable (though see p. 33) and subsidiary in terms of the analysis presented. This focus is part of the book’s brilliance – for example in pointing us to the

significance of the machinic in the emergence of “rule by nobody” (pp. 24-25) or the possibilities of a “more-than-human geopolitics” (p. 39). But the relative neglect of the economic or political economic dimensions of Predator Empire represents somewhat of a lost opportunity to deepen the analysis. There are relatively few occasions in the book when the underlying political economy of the rise and functioning of Predator Empire is mentioned. Even the way “enclosure” is used throughout the book, seems to have shaken off its political economy roots in analyzing the transition from feudalism to early industrial capitalism.

As in this case, throughout the book, political economy is sometimes hinted at, but not prosecuted, and an understanding of in whose interests Predator Empire may be (beyond “the state” or “America”) is eschewed. It is therefore both provocative and unfortunate to come to the conclusion, where Shaw writes: “Insecurity and alienation are highly productive – and profitable – forces for the mass enclosure of humanity” (p. 249). The book is extremely insightful on the many ways insecurity and alienation are productive, but misses the chance to investigate the implications of their profitability, and for whom. The architecture of Predator Empire, and of the emerging Droneworld, is literally built through contracts and procurements, through the purchase of material things, labor and services, supplied by a handful of corporations. Defense and security contractors, be they longstanding aircraft and weapons makers turned drone manufacturers such as General Atomics or Raytheon, civil engineering firms turned global professional services providers, such as The Louis Berger Group, or any number of new firms springing up to develop sensors, patterns of life analysis tools, and many other objects and services that build Predator Empire. Also in the book’s conclusion, Shaw remarks that “the corporate sector is driving the drone society as much as the military is” (p.236), but the book does not really delve into the potential significance of this observation.

My points about the geography and political economy of Predator Empire and Droneworld are offered not as major critiques of this book. This engagement is, rather, testament to the book’s awesome scope. Shaw is to be congratulated on giving us an unusually compelling work. His ability to draw together rich empirical material on, for example, the deep history of drones, with bold analysis of the dire political implications of Predator Empire, is truly impressive. In addition, Ian Shaw’s prose is, in many places, simply beautiful. This is a major contribution to our understandings of contemporary geopolitics.

Susan M. Roberts
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Dr. Ian G. R. Shaw's recent book, *Predator Empire: Drone Warfare and Full Spectrum Dominance*, details the emergence of the drone as a condition of technological civilization that ultimately extends the process of enclosure. Shaw points out the drone represents a new frontier of human existence: "humans have always employed objects, tools, and machines in their social lives...we are reaching a point in which mediation is now predominantly nonhuman" (Shaw, 2016, p. 20). As a result, Shaw maps for his reader a new theory of Empire in light of "the proliferation of intelligent and increasingly autonomous nonhuman actors" (Shaw, 2016, p. 20). This focus on objects as the entry point reinforces the utility of object oriented analyses of state power in critical geopolitics, and the book offers a fascinating, rich and theoretically sophisticated account of enclosure and its technologies.

Shaw begins with the British enclosure and traces it to the current issues of militarized policing, the war on terror, and most notably, drone warfare. Through this history, Shaw demonstrates the drone is both the extension of a much longer capitalist practice of enclosure, but also a new object that evidences a broader shift in warfare "from primarily state-oriented violence, involving a mass of soldiers and vertical hierarchies, to a series of hybrid or "low-intensity" conflicts that involve private contractors, paramilitaries, and criminals" (Shaw, 2016, p. 17). Shaw's theory of Empire focuses specifically on modern, American Empire as he traces the English Enclosure movement and the legacies of the Vietnam War to explain more recent emergences of a massive, prolific, and, most importantly, everyday globalized surveillance complex. In so doing, this book represents an invaluable and insightful advancement of critical geopolitical scholarship, but with an often narrow focus that requires further empirical expansion. The book maintains a particularly narrow, and often necessary, focus on class and capitalism. In what follows, I would like to expand considerations of the fragility of capitalism to include colonial history and additional intersectional systems of power – specifically, race and gender. Such expanded attention enriches empirical investigations that link this book to work in political geography that examines the limitations of "full spectrum dominance."

The fragility of the capitalist system lurks perniciously in support of the book's argument, and it is an important theme that warrants further development as scholars consider the massive violence of the technological state. Capitalist forms of domination and exploitation ultimately explain the emergence of technological civilization, and Shaw makes clear that the maintenance of a status quo of extreme marginalization and inequality drives the process of enclosure. He notes the "suffocating" modern surveillance complex of "increasingly depressed, surplus, and alienated populations" secures "nothing other than a grinding inequality" (Shaw, 2016, p. 155). Following from this, the extreme processes of securitization Shaw describes also implicitly reveal the system's fragility. The extraordinary

lengths to secure it make this quite clear. The book thus reveals the pervasive and extensive nature of enclosure and its role in perpetuating capitalist forces of dispossession and, in turn, exploitation.

The dronification of state violence is of course a global story of capitalism rooted in colonialist exploitation. However, in exemplifying this, the book focuses overwhelmingly on England and examples from the European context. There is little discussion of the processes of dispossession across the rest of the globe, particularly the periphery. This gap serves to obfuscate the highly racialized nature of enclosure. Apartheid may now be universalizing, but it is also a force hooked on difference. The book does not fully elaborate what this system in need of such extreme protection is beyond a capitalist one. In other words, there is little acknowledgement of the complex social and discursive processes that complement the need for technological civilization. The intersections of fragility of both masculinity and whiteness warrant further exploration to complete Shaw's ideas of "lone wolves," "full spectrum dominance," and "universal apartheid." This book offers exciting theoretical insight to advance and develop such discussions, and the book would benefit from more empirical breadth and deeper engagement with post-colonial attention to race, gender, and, finally, dispossession.

Post-colonial and feminist geographers argue that the emerging global apartheid is not quite universal in the way Predator Empire implies. Rather, it is a differentiating system of borders and detention for those rendered surplus and, subsequently, the targets of the technological state (Hiemstra, 2017; Loyd & Burridge, 2012; Mountz, Coddington, Catania, & Loyd, 2013). In fact, the extreme structural violence Shaw reveals depends on engines and technologies of difference beyond that of class. For example, one must also consider the ways colonial anxieties stemming from a history of the fragility of whiteness (Ferber, 1998; Guess, 2006; Hooks, 1992; Yancy, 2008) help explain the current formation of Empire. Shaw discusses the criminalization of the homeless and the poor, but this analytic must be extended to also recognize the historic criminalization of black and brown people – beginning with the colonialist construction of the savage, uncivilized "other" that justified global dispossession during the European colonial period.

More recently, there is the ongoing criminalization of migrants and an enclosure of a different sort at the border of "Western Civilization." This is evidenced, for example, by the ongoing militarization of the US Mexico border, where to quote Melissa Wright, quoting Anzaldúa (2007) "the third world grates against the first and bleeds" (Wright, 2014). To put Shaw's book in conversation with this work raises the question of what it means to create a boundary or an enclosure while still desperately requiring the resources and the labor of the people on the other side of that boundary. Racialization is an invaluable part of answering this as it

plays an indelible role in shoring up against the fragility of capitalism. An attention to the racialized nature of enclosure disrupts the assumption of universalization and also encourages an attention to the body, embodiment and lived experience. Such an attention moves toward a better understanding of how fragile, fleeting, and ineffective these technologies tend to be in practice (Tahir, Memon, & Prashad, 2016). Take, for example, the issue of drone strikes in the tribal areas of Pakistan and the need for the United States government to legally redefine who is an enemy combatant to perpetuate a masculinist narrative of drones as precise (and, by extension just and moral) killing machines (Tahir, 2014).

Further too, as we think more recently about American Empire and the notion of a lone wolf – “full spectrum dominance” is arguably a drive that also highlights the fragility of masculinity and its need for extreme violence. Of course, I do not mean to imply here that this book be three times its length. Rather, I mean to point out that as one applies Shaw’s theory to investigate cases of enclosure and dispossession these additional pieces of fragile systems of dominance must come into fuller focus.

Such attention helps move critical inquiry forward. Where does one go from the theory of Empire developed in this book? Shaw leaves us with these closing remarks: “If the godly heavens above once protected us from the demons below, then consider the Predator Empire as our new civilizatory ceiling, enclosing humanity in the great robotic inside – the best of us, the worst of us, and the last of us” (Shaw, 2016, p. 263). It is necessary to illuminate the everyday gaps and faults of the lived experiences of dominance and question how “full spectrum” it may really be. The further exploration of the fragility of privilege along intersecting lines of class, race and gender, etc. is essential because it helps to unveil some of the cracks and gaps of lived Empire.

The theory of Empire the book advances is an important entry for critical scholars to better understand, analyze, and, perhaps, undermine state violence. However, this cannot be the case without engaging the many examples of attention to lived Empire in feminist political geography that compliment this book and benefit from its theoretical contributions. I hope my comments here help to further draw connections between critical political geography and feminist and post-colonial geographies that elucidate colonial histories and the role of race and gender in solidifying enclosure. There is a need to recognize and bring Shaw’s arguments into better conversation with the broader literature on post-colonial dispossession. Further, it is important to recognize that class cannot in any way be untethered from race, gender, etc. The book’s sophistication offers a starting point to follow these threads that require continued attention and illumination in critical

geopolitical scholarship. A broader exploration of systemic fragility that enclosure seeks to obscure may be the only hope for moving us beyond the “robotic inside.”

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Ian Shaw's new book *Predator Empire* can be placed within a growing set of scholarship from the field of political geography that interrogates the histories and 'lines of descent' (Gregory 2013) of contemporary practices of war and security. In this sense, Shaw's book traces important lineages of contemporary drone warfare (through the Vietnam War, for example) as well as connects today's drone strikes to a broader assemblage of surveillance, policing, and military technologies and practices. As I have written about elsewhere (Kindervater 2017) one thing that distinguishes *Predator Empire* from this scholarship, however, is its insistence on placing the question of the human, and more specifically how the rise of drone warfare is impacting and changing the human condition, at the center of its analysis. Doing so enables Shaw to interrogate the ways that the emerging *Predator Empire* and connected surveillance state are reshaping the world we are living in as well as our relationships to each other and the technologies we interact with. This results in a book that carefully lays out the complexities of drone warfare – with its impact reaching far beyond the battlefield – but also stakes a claim on the future of the human condition.

In this forum, I focus on two areas or questions – processes of racialization in the *Predator Empire* and the question of resistance – that I think are underexplored in Shaw's book. The aim here is less critique than to push at lines of investigation that Shaw begins to open up in his analysis. Ultimately, these point to the strengths of *Predator Empire* and the need to take seriously the impact that drone technology is having on shaping human life and the possibilities to imagine life and society differently.

In Chapter Five ("Policing Everything") of *Predator Empire*, Shaw draws important connections between the proliferation of military drones and domestic policing practices. Not only do we see shared security practices at work in the *Predator Empire* at home and abroad – for example, the development of predictive policing and the use of algorithms – but furthermore, policing and drone targeting share similar logics of control and social organization. As he writes:

Thousands of years before drones spilled into the sky, a series of existential conditions were dividing the planet's inhabitants. In the age of electronic globalization, this social war has spread to become a planetary condition, and policing has become imperial policing. Everyone and everything must be kept in their place, peacefully locked inside the civilizatory enclosures. Today, as technological civilization becomes ever more capital intensive, as more and more humans are displaced by robotic systems, the spiraling contradictions are policed with ever greater force. (202)

Later in the chapter, Shaw explores this further through the highly-militarized and overwhelming police response to protesters in Ferguson, which is rooted not just

in the incorporation of military technology into police departments but more significantly in the structure and history of racism and inequality in the United States (218). While limited here to a discussion of contemporary and future policing, these structures and processes of racialization are important parts of the larger story of the emergence of drone warfare. Taking these into account opens up at least three possible avenues of investigation that add to and complicate Shaw's claims about the human in the age of Predator Empire.

First, one could account for the longer racialized historical geographies of drones and other technologies of the Predator Empire – an important “line of descent” that is not explicitly addressed in Shaw's narrative. This might draw, for example, from Simone Browne's work on the racialization of surveillance and surveillance technologies. In her 2015 book *Dark Matters*, she asks what it means to bring blackness into the frame of both surveillance practices and surveillance studies more generally. Looking, for example, at lantern laws, the plantation, and branding, she writes, “...rather than seeing surveillance as something inaugurated by new technologies, such as automated facial recognition or unmanned autonomous vehicles (drones), to see it as ongoing is to insist that we factor in how racism and antiblackness undergird and sustain the intersecting surveillance of our present order”(Browne 2015, 8-9). What would it look like then ask what it means to bring blackness into the frame of drone technologies and drone studies? Tyler Wall (2016) has begun to unpack this recently looking at the racialized violence common to policing and drone strikes, but one could extend this further to draw parallels between the emergence of Predator Empire and racialized surveillance and carceral geographies. This is especially relevant given Shaw's emphasis on spaces of enclosure and control being increasingly mediated by machines. As he notes, “Technological civilization thus increasingly resembles an open prison” (21).

A second, and connected, avenue brings the question of the racialization of drone technology into the purview of Shaw's ultimate object: the human. Shaw argues that Predator Empire is dronifying the human condition. Are we becoming drones ourselves? Perhaps less human or passive shells of what we once were — or as Shaw writes, “the mass production of anxious, paranoid, highly atomized individuals secured in their comfort capsules, soothed—and distressed—by the buzz of police drones stalking the skies” (262). Yet, in many ways the Western category of the human itself has always been a contested one. As Sylvia Wynter (2003) has argued, for example, racism and the construction of race is rooted in a politics of being, or to put in another way the resonates with Katherine McKittrick's work, a bifurcation of being and what it means to be human. In other words, racism and processes of racialization has always played a role in shaping the dominant view of who counts as human. The category of the human in this sense has and continues to be a necropolitical project (McKittrick 2013), which

might resonate with the way Shaw describes Predator Empire as an existential threat.

Third, attention to the racialized histories of Predator Empire might add to Shaw's analysis of capitalism and empire, which are central to the argument of his book. An important factor in the rise of Predator Empire for Shaw is the shift from a labor-intensive to a machine or capital-intensive form of empire. Linking changes in capitalism to Predator Empire enables Shaw to trace a longer history of alienation and enclosure that has intensified today with the proliferation of machines. In doing so, he provides a useful starting point for thinking about the structural and epistemological linkages between capitalism, war, and violence. While he turns to the English enclosure of the commons as a significant origin moment for this process of alienation, one could also look to the slave trade, for example, to find another history of violent alienation and dispossession linked with capitalism, which also connects back to the contested category of the human.

These potential avenues for bringing racialization into the story of the emergence of Predator Empire also enable an opening up of the question of resistance. While Shaw's project is to map out the complex assemblage (both today and historically) of the security state of which drone warfare is a part and to demonstrate its existential effects on the human condition, one is left with the question of what is to be (or can be) done. Given the totalizing nature of Predator Empire, what would resistance look like? Is it even possible to think about resistance in the way that Shaw describes the Predator Empire? For Shaw, an Arendtian program of action and critical thought is increasingly eclipsed by our contemporary machinic passivity. Given this and the importance of the human to Shaw's analysis, I would wager then that resistance in the age of Predator Empire would need to involve at its base a reconceptualization of the human. One starting point could be to return to Wynter. As she writes, "...one cannot 'unsettle' the 'coloniality of power' without a redescription of the human outside the terms of our present descriptive statement of the human, Man and its overrepresentation..." (Wynter 2003, 268). The dronification of the human condition, therefore, could lead to "the last of us" (263) as Shaw argues, or – perhaps more hopefully – challenge us to (re)imagine modes of being human that are not captured within the frame of the drone.

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I want to start by thanking Majed Akhter for organizing this review forum. He is a scholar and friend I have long respected. I also want to thank Kate Hall, Vanessa Massaro, and Susan Roberts for their insightful and generous comments—both here and at the Author Meets Critics panel at the 2017 AAG meeting in Boston.

Once a book is loose in the world, the words, sentences, and meanings it contains are splashed across a very public canvas. So it is both fascinating—but also satisfying—to discover how other people interpret your work. I wrote the bulk of *Predator Empire* in 2014 and into 2015. My aim was to situate drone warfare within the longer histories and geographies of human enclosure. The book is thus an *existential critique* of drone warfare, one that never strays too far from the twisted socio-technological landscapes of human being. *Predator Empire* is heavily influenced by the philosophy of Hannah Arendt (and, to a lesser, but still significant extent, Peter Sloterdijk). Arendt’s thoughts on totalitarianism, the human condition, and thinking, are guiding lights—for my book and the dark times we must now navigate.

In what follows, I want to respond to the comments put forward by each critic. I’ll avoid summarizing their interpretations, and stick closely to the meat of their concerns.

Let’s start with an important point raised by Sue Roberts, since it frames many of the criticisms that follow: the tendency towards universality in the book. To begin, Roberts writes, “Shaw is not afraid to draw out of the big picture implications of life under Predator Empire.” This stance is important to me. Indeed, I felt it was my academic *duty* to paint a broad picture. So much journalism, activism, law, and scholarship adopts a narrow (although important) lens when viewing drone warfare. Yes: international law, body counts, military strategies are all important. And yes, so are the physical locations of strikes, bases, and infrastructures. But mainstream accounts of drone warfare too often ignore its relationship to capitalism, empire, and human existence (something that Hall echoes in her comments). This, I think, is inimical to our liberty, democracy, and futures. The poverty of philosophy by which we approach the drone—and the robotic revolution more generally—must be challenged. Indeed, as our technological civilization becomes increasingly artificial, resembling the science fiction dystopias we watched as kids, our basic need for philosophy—ancient, humble, and unshaking—has never been more urgent.

Yet the limits of a broad (though not necessarily philosophical) approach, as Roberts identifies, is that “the overarching depictions of the state of “humanity” and the discussion of all-encompassing planetary logics, seemed to risk losing sight of the geographies of Predator Empire.” This is an important critique. There is, across the book, a universalization of humanity and technological civilization,

and one that, as Roberts writes, “glosses over the highly differentiated human experiences of state drone violence.” Kate Hall pushes this point on the “politics of being,” arguing that “the Western category of the human itself has always been a contested one.” Indeed, as Roberts, Massaro, and Hall all stress in different ways, this has the consequence of masking the *racialized* geographies and populations of the Predator Empire. In short, the book risks universalizing the always-already uneven processes of violence. Hall discusses a number of important ideas on racial forms of surveillance—which have long been invested in policing blackness. As Hall notes, alienation and dispossession were violently manifest in the slave trade, a period of history that encapsulates how the category of the human is contested. Accordingly, looking forward, Hall asks: “What would it look like then to ask what it means to bring blackness into the frame of drone technologies and drone studies?” This is an important question: all-too-often international relations shies away from an explicitly colonial understanding of drone strikes.

Vanessa Massaro is likewise keen to think of enclosure and dispossession at the “periphery,” given the book’s central focus on England and Europe. As she writes, “the book would benefit from more empirical breadth and deeper engagement with post-colonial attention to race, gender, and, finally, dispossession.” For her, the book’s focus on class must, and should be, accompanied by a history of whiteness (and masculinity) to help explain the formation of (European) empire. This perspective is particularly important, Massaro writes, given the ongoing criminalization of migrants on the border of “Western Civilization.” I think Massaro makes a number of salient points here, given that I have theorized the Predator Empire from the “core”—although I was always mindful that this was the case. Indeed, part of the appeal of empire is that the divisions between core and periphery bleed together (as the chapters on the Vietnam War and policing demonstrates). So, while I predominantly focus on the poor in my history of enclosure, this could be fruitfully accompanied by a recognition of what Massaro calls the “historic criminalization of black and brown people.” The two, of course, go hand-in-hand.

My hope was that the term empire *already* signifies this racial and geographic unevenness (a point that Roberts notes). And I do discuss European colonialism, racist U.S. policing practices, and the unyielding violences of capitalism’s social war—a battle launched centuries ago. But the criticisms are correct: my focus is usually on the more abstract, universal conditions of empire (although this is certainly informed by my empirical investigations). And that’s because I see these violent technologies as *universalizing forms*—condemning vast swathes of humanity to a hungry, growing, planetary biopolitics. A technological totalitarianism of which the drone is a key actor. Here, another of Roberts’ criticisms is important: “There are relatively few occasions in the book where the

underlying political economy of the rise and functioning of Predator Empire is mentioned.” While I go to great lengths to enmesh drone warfare within capitalism’s social war, I do not *follow the money*. True enough: there is little in the book about the corporations profiting from hellfire. Again, this stems from my approach: I am foremost interested in the existential conditions of enclosure. Doing so forefronts the alienation, insecurity, and anxiety of our Droneworld—but at the expense of mapping its corporate landscape in detail.

For Massaro, the Predator Empire’s scramble to secure humanity under a technological totalitarianism reveals the underlying *weakness* of the condition by which it is nourished: capitalism. As Massaro writes, “The extreme processes of securitization Shaw describes also implicitly reveal the system’s fragility.” This paradox is important. Capitalism must endlessly secure its insecurities like a dog chasing its tail. And this endless, circular, mechanism is important to unpick since, for Massaro, “a broader exploration of systematic fragility that enclosure seeks to obscure may be the only hope for moving us beyond the ‘robotic inside.’” I agree, to a point, that capitalism is simultaneously strong and weak, insecure and secure. But my concern—expressed across the book—is how an armada of robotic security apparatuses are entrenching themselves within the very *flesh of the world*. These technologies gnaw at the fabric of being and insert themselves in the human condition like a virus.

Discussing this point, Hall notes that the surveillance state is “reshaping the world we are living in as well as our relationship to each other.” In other words, we must understand empire as an existential constellation, one that polices—physically and metaphysically—the coordinates for the thinkable, the sayable, and the doable. I worry that the extreme processes of securitization today are doing far-lasting damage to the world. Wounds can heal of course. But sometimes they just continue to rot. Nonetheless, uncovering the gaps, fragilities and spaces of resistance to drone warfare remains a vital task. As Hall reflects, “one is left with the question of what is to be (or can be) done. Given the totalizing nature of Predator Empire, what would resistance look like? Is it even possible to think about resistance in the way that Shaw describes the Predator Empire?”

Here I think both Massaro’s prompt to think beyond the “robotic inside” is important, and something I did not directly address in *Predator Empire*. I agree with Hall that “resistance in the age of Predator Empire would need to involve at its base a reconceptualization of the human.” All of my critics share this fundamental concern for what it means to be human—a category that is not, and never was, a universal experience of being. Rather than human condition, we might, as Roberts argues, think of “human conditions” in the plural. Our task then becomes to consider—to *think*—how the world in which we live either nourishes or damages human conditions. In this sense, the dronification of humanity, writes

Hall, could “challenge us to (re)imagine modes of being human that are not captured within the frame of the drone.” This type of reimagining should put human security—understood as an existential or ontological security—at the heart of its concern. It must ask fundamental questions about what exactly *is* a good life.

All told, Roberts, Massaro, and Hall all identify some of the problems of adopting a universal narrative, particularly when it comes to the human. While I may have left underinvestigated the complex racial geographies of U.S. empire—I do hope to have crafted a philosophical account of drone warfare that takes aim at the grinding social war that scars our worlds. As Akhter writes in his introduction, the problem of the book’s big picture thinking is mirrored in the concept of Predator Empire. Is the Predator Empire an idea? A thing? An assemblage? A system? I think Akhter is correct to identify it as a type of *abstraction*. The Predator Empire is a blueprint that entrances our imperial managers, one that is continually materialized in the flesh of the world—but is never complete. As an abstraction, the Predator Empire signifies an imperial *will to power*: a series of physical and metaphysical conditions that sink their teeth into the planet. Totalizing but never total, and haunted by its own insecurity, the Predator Empire grasps and claws at its own impossible future. Our task is to refuse the common sense that feeds this robotic Leviathan.

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