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WAR AS A CONTINUATION OF POLITICS BY OTHER MEANS … UNMANNED

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Abstract

The growth of US combat capability due to the operational introduction of *drones* is the most significant of any weapon system in recent decades. Under this new operating model, the drones are proliferating a myriad of essential activities in the battle space, while relieving the pilot of the risk of monotonous or dangerous missions, who operates thousands of miles away in an air-conditioned cubicle, executing the attack on a high-definition monitor.

By analyzing the current situation, from the standpoint of the conduct the United States of America (USA), indications reveal change in the nature of the political debate influenced by the widespread employment of drones. Namely, judging specifically how drones affect the strategic culture of states by the use of coercive force to achieve political objectives and, in particular, the almost irresistible political temptation to employ air power as a principal military response. In this context, the issue at stake is whether Remote Control Air War strengthens the capacity of deterrence and compulsion of future opponents, or if, on the other hand, lowers the bar for the use of force, making hostile conflict more likely.

The focus of this discussion is on the argument that drones provide the ability to employ military capabilities in a conflict, without the need to build a broad political or public consensus. Likewise, while making the political decision-making process easier and spontaneous in order to use force, the planning and execution of military strategy is made more difficult, the result of the complexity and uncertainty of "boomerang" effects.

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1. Introduction

In November of 2001, somewhere in the desert of Afghanistan, the world witnessed the birth of a new and overwhelming chapter in the history of air power. Muhammad Atef became the first target from an unmanned American aircraft; a *drone* designated "*The Predator*". From that moment a new technology and concept of operations flourished, producing impressive and disproportionate effects, prompting an almost irreversible temptation by politicians to the nascent resource of Remote Control Air War.

The growth of US combat capability due to the operational introduction of *drones* is the most significant of any weapon system in recent decades. Namely, the ability to remain airborne with a predetermined objective for more than 24 hours while executing constant surveillance and carrying precision weaponry, over a ton, ready to be dropped on targets of opportunity. Under this new operating model, the drones are proliferating a myriad of essential activities in the battle space, while relieving the pilot of the risk of monotonous or dangerous missions, who operates thousands of miles away in an air-conditioned cubicle, executing the attack on a high-definition monitor.

To the extent this operational indispensability is increasing, a three-dimensional profusion of Remote Control Air War is developing. Specifically, in the diversity of shapes and sizes, the broadening the spectrum of missions and user base, and the increasing levels of autonomy on par with the prospect of weaponization. It is exactly the irresistibility of this surgical non-apocalyptic approach, and the reduced costs, that may make this propagation permanent with destabilizing effects for international relations.

By analyzing the current situation, from the standpoint of the conduct the United States of America (USA), indications reveal change in the nature of the political debate influenced by the widespread employment of drones. Namely, judging specifically how drones affect the strategic culture of states by the use of coercive force to achieve political objectives and, in particular, the almost irresistible political temptation to employ air power as a principal military response. In this context, the issue at stake is whether Remote Control Air War strengthens the capacity of deterrence and compulsion of future opponents, or if, on the other hand, lowers the bar for the use of force, making hostile conflict more likely. It is also important to consider while removing the human cost to the offender; the employed application of armed drones becomes a sufficient expression of the political will to wage war.

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The focus of this discussion is on the argument that drones provide the ability to employ military capabilities in a conflict, without the need to build a broad political or public consensus, making the political decision-making process easier and spontaneous in order to use force. However, a strategic analysis of the campaign of "selective executions" will assist in identifying aspects of the "boomerang effect" that threatens the operational effectiveness of Remote Control Air War, prospectively making the future security environment, by its very nature complex and adverse nature, increasing hostile and dangerous.

2.　　The Political Temptation For Remote Control Air War

American politicians have always admired the military capability to find and destroy targets from a distance (Zenko, 2010a). However, the American policy trend toward limiting the military footprint whenever confronted with challenges that threaten national interests is taken to the extreme with recourse to *drone* attacks. The fact that these systems are a low-cost option, always available, and with high operational efficiency is not distinct from this trend.

From this standpoint, the *Predator* is a technological evolution for the Obama Administration analogous to what the cruise missile was to President Clinton in the 1990s: a form of flexing foreign policy muscle without the inherent costs of employing ground forces. This political objective is one of the catalysts for the preeminence of future use of *drones* and, above all, to advance development of more capable systems, particularly in terms of reach, persistence and autonomy.

The relevance of the political preference for Remote Control Air War can be verified by noting that at the end of 2011 the USA employed *drone* attacks, simultaneously and continuously, in six different theaters, in addition to surveillance missions in at least a dozen countries, including the domestic level. In this context, operations in permissive air environments, where the threat to *the drones* is minimal and in some cases with tacit or explicit local government support, maximizes the persistent capability to collect intelligence and identify emergent targets.

The employment of *drones* translates into a smaller military "footprint" that may be politically attractive. The concept of remote operations and the characteristics associated with these systems to perform long-range attacks allow a reduction in the need for forward operating locations for power projection. Without the need for this strategic requirement international interference, the obligation to gather consensus, and build coalitions that support the use of force is reduced. Likewise, consulting Congress to obtain political legitimacy to carry out actions of Remote Control Air War is bypassed.

In addition, this technology is extremely enticing, both politically and militarily, in so far as it conveys a false impression that a war is no longer costly. The decision to wage war always had serious consequences. However, it is now possible to start a conflict without having to deal with some of the more severe implications, like sending ground troops. One of the factors of war deterrence assumes high costs translated into "blood and treasure". To reduce the shedding of "blood", war is made less harsh, less demanding and more socially acceptable, limiting the onus just to "treasure". Thus, Remote Control Air War fits into a long Western tradition of finding relatively safe

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methods to employ lethal force, such as artillery and aerial bombing, leading to the belief that avoiding military casualties is more valued than casualties among the opposing civilian population (Olsthoorn et al., 2011).

On par with the reduction of the individual requirement of the combatants, warfare at a distance requires less societal acceptance, making it a primary policy option. The use of cruise missiles on Somalia and Sudan during the Clinton presidency proves this observation. Also, American terrestrial intervention in Kosovo only occurred when the "guarantees of impunity" were pooled. (Ignatieff, 2000: 179) Thus, to remove the danger of loss of life, the employment of *drones* maximizes this concept of operation with impunity.

The perception of a war without costs, as pointed out by Andrew Callam (2010), may be due, firstly, to the fact that it is a conflict fought covertly, away from the view of society. In spite of the information age, it is difficult to gain access to remote areas or obtain images about the attacks, which helps to insulate the public from the damage, preventing a transparent and impartial assessment of such conduct, in particular the target typology and damage caused to the civil population. Secondly, the elimination of human risk for the USA makes war more acceptable, decreasing the general objections to its occurrence and prolongation.

On the other hand, the political-military interaction that precedes the war may also be affected. Up to this point, this collaboration sought to establish the most appropriate strategy for political objectives in such a way as to minimize the cost in "blood and treasure." While the military is looking for the human resources needed to achieve the established goals, politicians try to minimize the impact associated with massive armies. However, removing the human variable from the equation transforms the political-military calculation, a judgment each time more rational and less subjective. This change in the nature of political debate, the calculation of human risk to the economic cost of the intervention, may relegate the need for military consultation prior to the decision of the use of force to the background.

By virtue of providing a real-time common operating picture to decision-makers, it is possible that the decisions are ethically more consensual (Cummings, 2010). The greater granularity of information will mean greater accuracy, thus increasing understanding of the operational environment. This faculty, resulting from the application of automated analytical tools, allows a faster evaluation of operational risk and mission strategy, particularly in the process of target selection, facilitating the political decision for the use of force. The proclivity for Remote Control Air War can, however, affect the consistency of air policy. The Kosovo conflict reflects this typical moral conditioning imposed on air strategy, extreme discrimination and proportionality, to justify a fight with reduced risk. However, conducting attacks above 15,000 feet, outside the envelope of antiaircraft threats, reveals a greater concern for the safety of the pilots than for the judgment of the bombardment.

On the other hand, the ability to "humanize" the error will decrease even as the collateral damage will continue to exist. Conceptually, it is easier to accept collateral damage caused by a manned aircraft, whose pilot makes decisions in a fraction of a second while subject to the rigors and threats of fighting, than admit errors caused by the use of *drones*. The extreme concern to limit the collateral damage leads to the establishment of complex protocols for selection and executing attacks on targets.

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However, the inherent precision of *drones* associated with a typology of ever smaller and more diffuse targets, causes greater risk taking, especially for attacks in urban areas, contributing to a higher probability of unwanted effects. Thus, the reality presented in question will contribute to increasingly isolating society from military actions by reducing the supervision of political action. This erosion of verification and accountability of political action, essential pillars of waging war in a democratic society, can foster willingness for lethal force.

An indication of the slow-down of political control on the consent and authority for the use of force was demonstrated in the conflict of Libya in 2011, when Obama argued that authorization was not required from Congress to employ U.S. forces in conflict. One of the instruments available to ensure a greater political consideration in the use of force between the President and the US Congress is the "War Powers Resolution" of 1973, which requires the Administration to consult the Congress prior to employment of American armed forces in hostilities. There are, however, situations in which the President may employ military force without the prior approval of the Congress. For example, when the country has been or is in the process of being attacked, when an treaty obliges the defense of an ally, in cases of extraction of citizens at risk, in isolated punitive attacks, or in operations where the surprise prevents a wider public debate (Lugar, 2011: 5).

During the initial phase of the operation in Libya (Operation Odyssey Dawn), the actions of American forces were significantly more intensive, sustained and dangerous than in the later phase, Operation Unified Protector, commanded by NATO, in which the United States played a supporting role. During this stage, according to the perspective of the Obama Administration, American participation was limited by three factors: military means employed, the nature of the mission, and the risk of escalation. In statements to Congress, Harold Koh (2011) defended the Administration's position on why the operation in Libya did not qualify as "hostilities" under the "War Powers Resolution." Firstly, it was a mission with limited objectives. Secondly, because the exposure of U.S. forces was limited, risk for casualties was minimized. Thirdly, the risk of escalation was reduced since land forces would not be used. Finally, the employment of military resources was limited to the suppression of enemy air defenses to ensure the flight exclusion zone and the *Predator* attacks on targets in support of the mission of protecting civilians.

From this perspective, the use of *drones* supported two of these positions; the limited exposure of the forces and the minimized risk of conflict escalation. However, the scope to employ force is substantially and dangerously extended by facilitating the frequency of Remote Control Air War. The recently introduced resolution about the "introduction of American forces in hostilities" can be reductive in the case of the use of *drones*, to the extent that it eliminates the concern of human losses. Although forces are exempt from physical risk, the number and nature of *drone* attacks can contribute significantly to increasing the stakes of hostilities.

The political calculation about definition of hostilities has focused mainly on the probability of occurrence of low levels of American forces, minimizing other relevant considerations for use of force (Lugar, 2011: 6). From this prospect, the conflict of Libya does not constitute any of the exceptions mentioned, being that American aircraft participated in the attacks and the American support to NATO forces was crucial, specifically at the level of logistics, command and control, and support for deficient

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operational areas such as information, surveillance, airborne refueling, or space capabilities.

As instruments of coercive diplomacy, in the context of deterrence and compulsion, the employment of unmanned *drones* to fight in order to reduce the potential costs of the threat and use of force, can have major implications (Nolin, 2012: 13). Chiefly, in situations of added significant asymmetry between the actors in dispute and whereas the personnel costs are virtually zero, the credibility of such threats will be strengthened, since the use of force will occur with greater ease, and without the time-consuming political and public scrutiny associated with the use of force by traditional means. Similarly, it is expected that possessors of combat *drones* will become more daring and increasingly use Remote Control Air War, in a preventive manner and as the primary instrument of conflict resolution. To simultaneously fight in six different locations on the planet, without any direct risk to its forces, the US seems to validate the hypothesis that aerial warfare has become more productive with the emergence of *drones*, confirming a greater inclination to employ this military instrument to achieve limited national objectives.

In this sense, the drones provide politicians an increase of control that extends to three levels (Dawkins, 2005: 21-24): the control of opportunity and pace of operations to the extent that minimize external interference, the control over the political debate regarding the use of force, and the perception of precise control from the strategic level to the tactical employment of forces, greatly diminishing the considerable interference in all details of the conduct of war. Therefore, the exclusive use of this form of air power becomes a political solution, increasingly prominent, less demanding, easily justified, and acceptable. By limiting casualties and eliminating the possibility of prisoners of war, *the drones* allow the missions to be planned and executed in remote areas in a more subtle way. The possibility of performing an operation to attack without the prior media exploitation also maximizes the operational surprise.

To assess in greater detail the temptation for the employment policy of Remote Control Air War, the particular case study of the American counterterrorist campaign will be examined.

3. A new concept of operations: "The only game in town"

On November 3, 2002, in the wilderness of Yemen, a *Predator* controlled by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) followed a car with six passengers. One of the occupants, Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi, deemed responsible for the attack on the *USS Cole*, was on the President´s Al-Qaeda most sought after hit list. In an uninhabited area, a *Hellfire* missile was fired on the vehicle killing the six occupants; the first action of "targeted killing" ("selective execution") in history by the use of *drones*. In August 2009, a leading Pakistani *Taliban*, Baitullah Mehsud, was resting on the terrace of a dwelling, together with his wife. Without advance notice, a missile launched from a *Predator* destroyed the house killing the terrorist, wife, and bodyguard. The execution in September 30, 2011 of Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen, one of the most influential operational members of Al-Qaeda, has raised the bar of this modality, since it was the first intentional killing of an American citizen.

These three examples, from more than four hundred attacks carried out by the USA

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since 2002 outside of theaters of operation such as Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia, mainly by CIA-operated *drones*, mirror the geographical spread, the frequency of attacks, and demonstrate the emerging status of the prime modality of "selective executions" in the use of Remote Control Air War. Since June 2004, the Bush Administration authorized 45 attacks in northwest Pakistan. During the first term of the Obama Administration this number increased fivefold, in attempt to preserve political capital from the risk and cost associated with alternative military strategies based on massive employment of land forces.

The need for the US to be "agile and accurate" in the use of military power is achieved with the use of *drones* and by Special Forces (Obama, 2009). From the viewpoint of the Administration, the selective attacks are strategically sensible. Specifically, the drones provide an unbeatable ubiquity and persistence, together with precision weapons; afford leverage and a window of opportunity to act. Compared with other military options, the elimination of risk to American forces makes these capabilities especially desirable. Additionally, *drones* reduce the danger to civilians in comparison with traditional bombing alternatives, since an improved visualization of the target allows better decisions, with pinpoint accuracy.

It could be argued that this offensive counterterrorism strategy has delivered immediate results in the elimination of terrorists. The continuous pressure on terrorist havens, unpunished until recently, makes an action, movement, and contacts with allies difficult, forcing the terrorists to devote more resources to survival. Also, the psychological effect on the terrorist caused by the uncertainty of the next attack and survival, constrains operations. Empirically, the operational results arising from the employment of unmanned *drones* indicate that obtaining the same results by alternative means would require a large scale military force with associated political, economic, and social drawbacks. In this way, the strategic consequences that derive from the use of force are smaller than those resulting from the projection of armies, which are usually perceived as foreign occupation. In addition, wars of occupation tend to be expensive and to ignite the resentment against the United States.

Similarly, it is argued that *drones* reduce the escalation of the conflict, making the platform an essential tool in counterterrorism strategy (Anderson, 2010). The logic is simple: decimating the principal leadership with the most experience in the network degrades the command and control ability of Al-Qaeda. The zenith of this program occurred with the death of Osama Bin Laden, with recourse to an action of "selective enforcement", in which Special Forces were used to ensure positive identification of the target and its extraction.

The attrition of Al-Qaeda leadership hinders the reconstitution of the organization and reduces operational efficiency. For example, of the 30 primary members of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, drones have killed 20 since 2010 (Nolin, 2011: 19). Contrary to popular belief, the number of trained terrorists is quite limited (Byman, 2006). When an experienced terrorist is eliminated there is a direct impact on operations as it takes several months to train a replacement with sufficient experience to be effective. Regardless, the organization continues to recruit terrorists but they lack the requisite experience and leadership to constitute a significant threat.

Other academics, citing testimonies of Al-Qaeda operatives, go further by proposing the hypothesis that there would be a greater threat to the world of nuclear terrorism

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without the use of this modality (Zenko, 2010b). From this standpoint, the *drone* attacks are an essential tool for killing terrorists who provide operational support to international terrorism, this option considered morally justified to prevent future terrorist attacks. Everyone seems to agree that killing the insurgents does not automatically lead to victory, but as Steven Metz (2000: 55) emphasizes, "a resolution of the root causes is easier with the insurgent leaders outside of the scene."

4. The "boomerang" effects from the "selective executions" сampaign

These optimistic propositions view the use of drones as the most effective and necessary way to use military force against insurgents. However, the official American support for the conduct of this operation mode is somewhat paradoxical. Firstly, an expansive interpretation of the legal framework is transmitted while simultaneously maintaining limited criteria. Secondly, a modality of action is legally justified while taking place covertly. Finally, factual details about the decision-making process and the conduct of the intelligence services are limited to the public while an image of transparency is advocated.

Bergen et al. (2011) have questioned whether the *drone* campaign, although useful in the short term, may undermine American efforts to stabilize the region, creating a long-term gain for Al-Qaeda. Peter Singer (2009: 312) asks whether or not this mode of warfare contributes to an increase of revolt and membership in the terrorist cause, while Jane Mayer (2009) argues that the global employment of *drone* attacks will make retaliation inevitable.

The public debate on the effectiveness of the employment of unmanned *drones* in lethal attacks on terrorists has not yet been proved an unequivocal strategic success. In the same way, it is not clear what the achieved outcomes, with the attrition imposed on terrorist leadership beyond the impact that civilian casualties, have on the recruitment of new terrorists, as well as the escalation of attacks that destabilize Pakistan. In the case of lethal offensive actions, circumscribed to limited areas, with access to real-time images of the results of the attacks, the direct effects are measurable. However, these attacks have costs psychological and physical, direct and indirect, and cumulative and interrelated. These consequences will be felt at multiple levels (tactical, operational and strategic) and in multiple dimensions (political, economic, civil and military). Because military interventions should not be considered an ephemeral moment, it will be very difficult to foresee a conflict in which there is no need for contact on the ground between the parties in opposition. For this reason, the unique aspect of Remote Control Air War in irregular conflict intensifies difficulties regarding the stabilization and reconstruction efforts, to the extent that it does not allow the establishment of trust through direct contact with the populations.

The lack of a comprehensive strategy to deal with a conflict makes limited use of military force more attractive, at the expense of lengthy and other seemingly ineffective instruments of national power. The use of the military instrument, quickly launched with high readiness, deflects the need to develop other instruments of power and provide them with sufficient resources to implement a long-term plan to address the fundamental causes of the conflict. As pointed out by Robert Gates (2007), one of the most important lessons of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is that successful military action is not enough to win. The perception is that the military instrument is

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suitable to defeat states, particularly for regime change, but inadequate to combat ideas.

For some analysts, the primary recourse for *drones* is an inconstant way of dealing with the problem of terrorism (Thiessen, 2010). The problem lies in the fact that the *drone* attacks are used as a substitute for other operations to capture terrorists alive. The information obtained by interrogation of more than a hundred terrorists captured after the September 11, prevented, according to CIA sources, numerous terrorist attacks. Still, the nature of the target´s remote location makes capture difficult without risking heavy American or host nation casualties, and this must be considered.

On the other hand, attacking the tribal areas in Pakistan strengthens the same forces that the United States is trying to defeat, by alienating "hearts and minds" in an unstable Muslim state with nuclear weapons. Unsurprisingly, the insurgents exploit the resentment of the population reaffirming themselves as a resistance force against the injustice of a Remote Control Air War campaign, which, at the same time, increases the power of attraction for new recruits. It is this balance between the neutralization of insurgent groups and the cost of encouraging more insurgents, which must be found.

Concurrently, reports grow about the increase of anti-American opposition between the Afghan population and Pakistani and European immigrants in the West, as well as between the members of elite Pakistan security services (Gerges, 2010). Political objectives are harmed because of the negative image that emerges in the stricken areas, and that image expands globally. This trend can be worrisome since for some countries, especially those affected, as the American image is irretrievably linked to Remote Control Air War. The fact that the *Predator* has become for many Muslims the epitome of the arrogance of American power may, in the long term, obfuscate the operational effectiveness of this combat mode.

The indicators presented as a whole seem to support a phenomenon of a loss of moral authority of those conducting Remote Control Air War, particularly in a campaign to win the "hearts and minds" of the local population. This perception than may be much greater than actual civilian casualties. In this way, without the need for direct contact with the people, the air attacks can only surgically remove insurgents. Thus, a state that seeks to impose its will on the opponent, without risking the lives of soldiers, will lose the strategic value of gained moral superiority (moral high ground). This argument leads William Arkin (2008) to agree with the possibility of *drones* posing a long-term risk: the perception of air power and the user as inhuman.

The strategic consequences arising from direct combat between human beings and Remote Control Air War are disparate. The employment of manned aircraft exposes human resources to the rigors of combat and transmits a perception of greater political determination and willingness to accept the risk of casualties. **Despite the impunity with which manned aircraft conduct attacks, resulting from air superiority, the operational risk to personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq is still substantial. The number of shot down aircraft, the possibility of capture, and the insecurity experienced on air bases, which were the target of several deadly attacks, confirm this threat.** This risky interaction between combatants contributes to the enemy focusing efforts in the area of direct conflict (McGrath, 2010: 15). However, the extensive use of Remote Control Air War, seen in absolutist perspective, seems to indicate that while

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one side sees the war as a tool, a means to an end, the other regards it from a metaphysical perspective, represented in the exaltation of the act of dying for a cause. For this reason, the perception of a lack of political determination to risk the lives of its citizens in combat can also contribute to strengthening the opponent´s resistance, developing a media information campaign to attract new members to the cause.

Other critics synthesize this imbalance between the costs and benefits of the attacks (Kilcullen et al., 2009). Firstly, the drones create a siege mentality among civilians. Second, the outrage is not only located in tribal areas and but extends throughout Pakistan and in the international community. Finally, using technology to replace a strategy, without a concerted information campaign addressed to Pakistani public is problematic. Thus, the decision to escalate the attacks may generate a greater number of terrorist actions in the face of dissatisfaction giving reason to the argument to those who advocate a possible "boomerang effect" in which attacks can create more terrorists than those who are killed.

In this sense, the attacks cause an increase in the number and the radicalism of Pakistanis supporting extremism, decreasing the strategic objective of making Pakistan a more cooperative and capable regional ally. Thus, the collateral damage and the perception of the constant violation of sovereignty also contributes to an increase in feelings of anger that unites the population around extremists and causes the spread of attacks in other areas of the country and the globe. (Kilcullen, 2009)

In this framework, it is difficult to find unanimity about the effectiveness of this mode of warfare. Recent studies show that the number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan have decreased to the extent that there is an escalation in the program of "selective executions" (Qazi et al., 2012), looking for a way to defend a negative correlation between the attacks of drones and the increase of militant violence (Johnston et al., 2013). Although there is difficulty gathering consensus about the cause for anti-American attitudes, it can be seen that these explanations are based on the assumption that individuals form their opinion about the USA primarily as a reaction to what the USA is and does (Blaydes et al., 2010). **However, these authors advocate that the level of anti-Americanism among Muslim populations is not an organic result in response to acts of the USA. Rather, the level is mainly dependent on the intensity of anti-American messages disseminated by prominent elites of a given country. Namely, the anti-American rhetoric works as a political instrument to obtain the support of sections of the population, made more pronounced where there is political competition between secular and Islamic factions.**

The "selective executions" campaign is politically attractive because the reduced costs favor domestic support while at the same time demonstrating political will. However, the unwanted effects only appear in the long-term. In addition to the indispensable military value, the truth is that Remote Control Air War is a provocative symbol of American power, without constraints to respecting the sovereignty of states and eliminating the collateral damage. This conduct may offer to other actors in the international system incentive to imitate such behavior. However, what is at stake is not the weapon system, but the actual operational employment of that system. To the extent that the employment of Remote Control Air War is presented as a product of

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American "exceptionalism" stating it as wise, legal, ethically correct, and with surgical precision, doubts arise about the impact of this conduct on other international actors. In other words, being that the United States is an example of world leadership, can it pledge that the submitted legal, moral, and political justifications will be equally applicable to other countries, when they resort to Remote Control Air War to confront threats to their safety? Additionally, to what extent will the US be morally able to condemn such conduct?

A recently published study by the Stimson Center (2014) summarizes these concerns and recommends several steps to ensure greater transparency and accountability on the conduct of "selective executions". Among them is the need to perform a cost-benefit analysis about the function of lethal *drone* attacks in selective counter-terrorist actions; the importance of explaining the legal basis for the conduct of the attacks, as well as the approximate number, location and affiliation of the targets of the attacks; the identities of civilians killed and the number of attacks carried out by military forces and the CIA. In addition, the United States must make a commitment to the development of international standards for the use of lethal force outside the theaters of traditional operations. In this way, it will be possible to establish precedents that may be accepted by the international community, to regulate the future employment of Remote Control Air War.

5. Conclusion

Considering war as the continuation of political relations, the preeminence of Remote Control Air War can contribute to altering strategic culture if states use this type of coercive power to advance political goals.

In reality, the political irresistibility, resulting from the associated cost reduction for the use of force, is expressed by the increasing intensity on the level of discrimination for individual targets. It is, similarly, conveyed by the increased frequency of attacks and the greater geographical range for selective employment of deadly force. Nevertheless, this tempting policy causes "boomerang" effects, signifying that to democratize and civilize means more war. These effects threaten to transform the way states, non-state organizations, and the individual face the conflict by constantly changing the threshold, frequency, actors, and effects of the conflict. This makes the future security environment, by its very nature complex and adverse, increasingly hostile and dangerous.

While war was once reserved for the achievement of vital state interests, Remotely Control Air War promotes enlargement of state interests by favoring the military response option to achieve peripheral interests while decreasing the political constraints, both military and civilian. In this way, and regarding the costs of political action, it is assessed that this method streamlines the political decision-making process, or bypasses it, since it is possible to employ military capabilities in a conflict without the need to build a broad political consensus and endure public scrutiny.

These remotely operated systems offer strategic alternatives and flexibility to employ assets without the burden of positioning forces in hostile territory, therefore, increasing the freedom of political maneuver. Decreasing the need of forward operating bases to support military detachments reduces the strategic requirement of building regional

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partnerships. Thus, the strategic and moral incentives to make this modality increasingly precise and remotely operated are increasing as large-scale wars decrease in number and intensity. Furthermore, the cost reduction of political action that can provide preventive military action, in areas of strategic interest, puts into perspective an increase of regional conflict and with it greater civil damage.

Due to operational and political benefits, the drones will constitute an essential capacity to increase the situational awareness in the battle space, while, simultaneously, provide for the application of lethal force in a discreet way. This capability may create change in regional power dynamics providing small and medium-sized powers an affordable capability, associated with the projection of power, putting an adversary´s Center of Gravity at risk without traditionally prohibitive costs. Thus, an upturn in an offensive posture is expected, although to some extent preventive, by virtue of the reduced employment cost of these capabilities. Instead of deterring potential aggressors, it seems more likely, the prospect of an arms race in search of leveling the asymmetry, increasing the proliferation of *drones* with potentially more damaging forms of employment. In this case, the adverse effects of persistent surveillance and precision create a presumption of infallibility that can motivate risky political decision making, like attacks in urban areas.

With regard to the strategic effectiveness of the Remote Control Air War on non-state actors, it is dependent, like other military instruments, on the amplitude of the actor's objectives. The American escapade in Iraq and Afghanistan discouraged any interest to invade or occupy tribal regions in Pakistan or countries like Somalia, Yemen, or Libya. However, the need to replace the conventional option for a political and publicly acceptable solution, catapulted the use of *drones* to an urgent operational requirement.

 In this looming strategic synthesis, the modality of "selective executions" induces a panoply of "boomerang" effects, which translates to a higher possibility of terrorist retaliation. Specifically, these effects are expressed in the recruitment of new insurgents, a greater complexity of the political relationship in regards to American strategy in the geographical areas of the attacks, and the greater regional destabilization in countries such as Pakistan or Yemen. Regardless of the ability to establish a direct causal relationship, an erosion of American credibility in the region is anticipated, which will gradually spread throughout the world.

The spread of this capability to new theaters and the range of tactical-level targets can accelerate the local, national, and international opposition, contributing to the destabilization of domestic governments in whose territory attacks occur. Therefore, the willingness and ability of these governments to take effective action may be reduced against the insurgents. On this view, the focus of the campaign on the targets of strategic interest, rather than the widespread removal of operational targets, will offer lower unwanted effects. Similarly, the transfer of the program by the CIA to the armed forces can provide the much-needed transparency and accountability to this one embodiment still shrouded in secrecy.

Additionally, the weaponization of *drones*, as a consequence of technological proliferation, may be readily available to smaller powers in the medium term. Given the number of countries, and organizations that have drones with range and payload capacity to carry substantial conventional or mass destruction weapons, it is possible to anticipate the spread of this threat at a global level. A natural extension of the user

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base for terrorist groups, criminal organizations and even to individuals, can spread the danger of threats facing the United States.

Unlike nuclear weapons, which by its consequences discourage use, the cost of utilizing Remote Control Air War is relatively low, encouraging developed nations to coerce and impose their will on other nations with increasingly limited risk. The circumlocution of interventions in remote areas of the globe, confirm a foreshadowing, in embryonic form, of future air strategy, forcing a reconsideration of the relationship between war and peace in democratic societies. Therefore, the unusual combination of characteristics such as the distance between combatants, combat asymmetry, autonomy in the use of force, and minimization of political and personnel risk, affirm the modality of Remote Control Air War as politically enticing. That said, Remote Control Air War is not an end in itself, but primarily, a fundamental tool to achieve certain political ends. Moreover, this mode is not a magical solution to the political goal of determining the objectives for the use of military power.

As the aircraft was one of technological solutions that made it possible to balance the asymmetry created by the increase in firepower and entrenchment characteristic of the First World War, the *drones* have emerged as a possible solution to the contemporary tactical problems generated by location, identity and reduced signature of targets in remote global locations. Hence, to expect that these systems become the strategic solution for current and future wars, will certainly be a misjudgment. Moreover, profound consequences will accrue to accentuate the erosion of the sovereignty of states and the consequent increase of instability in international relations.

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