

Peter L. Bergen, Daniel Rothenberg. *Drone Wars: Transforming Conflict, Law, And Policy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. \$34.99, paper, ISBN 978-1-107-66338-1.



Reviewed by James I. Walsh

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Commissioned by Seth Offenbach (Bronx Community College, The City University of New York)

How are combat drones—armed, remotely piloted, combat aircraft—changing the nature of warfare? *Drone Wars: Transforming Conflict, Law, and Policy*, edited by Peter L. Bergen and Daniel Rothenberg, takes up this important question by collecting essays and analyses from a diverse range of contributors. The book marks one of the first attempts to address the consequences of the military drone revolution in a comprehensive way, considering important ethical and legal implications as well as strategic and political consequences.

The collection is divided into four thematic sections. The first addresses the political and military consequences in countries where militants are targeted with drones, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen. David Rohde, a Western reporter held hostage by the Haqqani militant group for over six months, describes in vivid detail how his captors feared drones and took steps to avoid detection by their sensors. Bergen and Jennifer Rowland next describe their important effort to collect open-source information on the

location, target, and consequences in terms of militant and civilian deaths of each drone strike conducted by the United States outside of recognized theaters of war. Their dataset is a crucial resource for understanding the patterns of strikes and how the pace and targets of drone strikes have changed over time. A key challenge in collecting such data, however, is identifying the victims of drone strikes. Militants have incentives to exaggerate the degree to which civilians are killed by drones, while outsiders face powerful political and logistical barriers to both defining who is a “militant” as well as determining who is killed and injured by drone strikes. Sarah Holewinski takes up these issues in her contribution, arguing that greater transparency about how targeting decisions are made will help to ensure that the United States is properly held accountable for its actions. Christopher Swift and Saba Imtiaz discuss the domestic political impacts of drone strikes in Yemen and Pakistan, respectively. Both hold that drones reverberate within existing political conflicts and that understanding the context of such

conflicts is necessary for understanding the long-term consequences of relying on drones to counter militant groups. Both suggest that drone strikes might aggravate political divisions in both countries in ways that make countering militants more rather than less difficult.

Combat drones create novel challenges for international humanitarian law and international human rights law; the second set of contributions analyzes these challenges. Charles Blanchard, a former general counsel for the United States Air Force, emphasizes that drones are remotely piloted. Like more conventional weapons, such as piloted strike aircraft, drones are always under human control, and thus, he argues, capable of being subject to the same international and domestic rules that govern conventional use of force. William Banks's chapter is a useful companion to Blanchard's analysis, as it highlights how their regular deployment outside of recognized theaters of war and the capacity to target specific, known individuals in addition to groups of suspected enemy combatants challenges the laws of war. Naureen Shah suggests that these capabilities blur the lines between traditional military operations and intelligence operations, which in the United States are typically governed by different and less stringent oversight procedures than conventionally piloted strike aircraft.

The third major section of the book collects chapters that focus on the strategic and policy implications of drones. Peter Singer rightly notes that the technological development for drones, as well as other technologies, is rapidly outpacing our current capacity to govern and think through the ethical and legal implications of technological change; this is a point that Rosa Brooks develops in more detail. Megan Braun suggests that drone technology itself is not revolutionary but is part of a more gradual evolution of surveillance and precision weapons technologies. What is revolutionary, though, is the fact that drones have enabled a new policy of targeted killings, a change that is in

some ways independent of drone technology and that raises important questions about the ethics of the use of force, discussed briefly by David True.

The book closes with considerations of how drone technology has and will continue to change the future of warfare. This section opens with an interview with an anonymous resident of Pakistan's tribal areas, who stresses both how drones are quite accurate at hitting physical targets, such as building and vehicles, but at the same time create widespread anxiety among residents without a direct connection to militant groups. Werner J. A. Dahm speculates how drones might change in the future, while Konstantin Kakaes provides a short and fascinating history of the little-known development and use of drones since the early twentieth century. In their contributions, Samuel Issacharoff and Richard Pildes, as well as Brad Allenby, hold that rather than considering how the development of drone technology will change society, we must consider how it interacts with social structures and laws to jointly determine the consequences of new weapons systems. The book closes with Rothenberg's analysis of how surveillance and precision targeting technologies are allowing a fundamental shift in the use of force from targeting enemy formations to targeting specific individuals anywhere in the world.

Drone Wars, then, is a wide-ranging review of current thinking in policy and academic circles regarding the military, legal, and social consequences of the use of combat drones. But even a book as lengthy as this cannot alone provide in-depth discussion of all of the implications of this new military technology. For example, there is little assessment of how the publics in countries that use combat drones, such as the United States, Britain, and Israel, view this technology. Since drones lack on-board crews, they eliminate the possibility of physical harm to military personnel. Might it be the case that their ability to wage war without risking military casualties could lead mass publics and political parties to support con-

flicts more readily than in the past? The contributions to the book are heavy on law, technology, and public policy, and there is surprisingly little social-scientific, systematic assessment of the consequences of combat drones. No doubt this is a reflection of the fact that social scientists typically do not investigate an issue until sizable quantities of useful data are available. As drones become more frequently used both for combat but also for peaceful domestic purposes, political scientists, economists, and sociologists will begin to pay more attention to the social issues that they raise.

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