

Asymmetric Strategies and Asymmetric Threats: A Structural-realist Critique of  
Drone Strikes in Pakistan, 2004-2014

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## Abstract

As a component of the overall policy to defeat global terrorism and prevent attacks against the U.S., the Bush and Obama administrations have turned to unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones. From 2004 to 2014, Pakistan has seen the largest volume of U.S. drone strikes targeting radical groups such as al Qaeda and the Taliban, a trend that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. On the surface, using drones to eliminate terrorists while avoiding an official armed conflict aligns with the theory of neo- or structural realism developed by Kenneth Waltz. And yet although 9/11 served as the impetus for the U.S. to refocus attention on ameliorating the threat of terrorism and to initiate far-reaching measures to protect homeland security, there remains intense debate over whether or not the U.S. is actually more secure than it was prior to 9/11.<sup>1</sup> While structural realism is still relevant to the current international system, the effects of drone strikes in Pakistan may set the U.S. on a path toward increasingly destabilizing situations that could lead to heightened insecurity and ultimately a change in power in the international system. The existing literature suggests that drone strikes in Pakistan are (1) leading to revenge-driven counter attacks, (2) intensifying radical anti-Americanism and creating more potential terrorists, (3) damaging the U.S. relationship with nuclear-armed Pakistan, (4) destabilizing the regions where drone attacks are launched, and (5) undermining American “soft power.” The culmination of these five trends has the potential to disrupt the current balance of power in a way that is not in America’s national interest. The unique security dilemma presented by the

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Jake. 2015. "13 Years after 9/11, Are We Safer?". *Cbsnews.com*. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/13-years-after-911-are-we-safer/> (13 December 2015).

asymmetrical threat of terrorism and the asymmetrical response of drone strikes necessitates the continued evolution of neorealism as an IR theory.

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## 1. Introduction

*“Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.”*<sup>2</sup> – George W. Bush

These words, spoken by President George W. Bush in an address to Congress just nine days after the deadly attacks of September 11, 2001, set in motion a new era of American foreign policy under the Bush Doctrine of Preventative War that would be defined by a revolutionary tactic – drone strikes. Drones have unofficially become the weapon of choice in the U.S. attempt to manage the threat of terrorists, and therefore it is important to assess the effects of drone strikes in both the short and long term. According to the Stimson Task Force on U.S. Drone Policy, “the US executive branch has yet to engage in a serious cost-benefit analysis of targeted UAV strikes as a routine counterterrorism tool.”<sup>3</sup> While this thesis will not present a traditional, empirical cost-benefit analysis, it is intended to analyze the consequences of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan through a review of existing literature and explore how neorealism must evolve in light of the distinct security dilemmas of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The research will not attempt to definitively conclude the effectiveness of drone strikes, as effectiveness is subjective and could be defined by anything from how many militants are killed to the ratio of high-value targets (HVTs) that are eliminated. A determination of effectiveness lacks a broader understanding of the realities of the current international system and ignores the valuable lessons of IR theory. Instead, this thesis will evaluate the ways in which drone strikes in Pakistan from 2004-2014 may impact the security of the U.S. and the stability of the international structure; it will bring to light some of the potentially unintended consequences of these policies and prescribe alternatives for the

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<sup>2</sup> Bush, George W. Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People. United States Capitol, Washington, DC. 20 September 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Stimson (June 2014). Recommendations and Report of the Task Force on U.S. Drone Policy. Retrieved from [http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/task\\_force\\_report\\_final\\_web\\_062414.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/task_force_report_final_web_062414.pdf).

future. The research will use Pakistan as the primary case study because it has been the target of the most drone strikes over the longest period of time, and relations with Pakistan are at the core of U.S. counterterrorism strategy. Rather than concluding that drone strikes in Pakistan are “good” or “bad,” this thesis seeks to express that if we ascribe to the theoretical assumptions of neorealism, we can understand the rationale behind U.S. drone policies and cautiously predict the outcomes that may present themselves in response to the strikes America has carried out in Pakistan over the last decade. Additionally, if we allow for the continued refinement of the neorealist framework, we can suggest alternative responses to asymmetrical threats in order to better manage the security dilemma.

To be clear, this thesis is not intended to be a comprehensive historical account of terrorism. Nor does it attempt to claim statistical causation between drone strikes and certain global trends, such as increases in terrorist attacks or the rise of new threats like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Terrorism is a complex and ever-changing phenomenon that the U.S State Department defines as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.”<sup>4</sup> Though experts like Crenshaw<sup>5</sup> and Post<sup>6</sup>, among others, have proposed a variety of explanations for what motivates terrorists, we cannot say with certainty the exact causes of extremist violence and unfortunately, we have few concrete solutions to ameliorate such an asymmetrical threat. I am fully aware, therefore, that my research cannot generate answers to these multi-faceted problems. What this research offers, however, is structural realist analysis of the security dilemma presented by

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. State Department. 2014. *Country Reports On Terrorism 2013*. Washington, DC: U.S. State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism.

<sup>5</sup> Crenshaw, Martha. 2000. "The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the Twenty-First Century". *Political Psychology* 21(2).

<sup>6</sup> Post, Jarrold. 2005. "Understanding Terrorism: Psychosocial Roots, Consequences, and Interventions". *Political Psychology* 26(1).

terrorism and of the available data on drone strikes in Pakistan between 2004 and 2014. Scholars have written at length, as described later on, about the ethics, the legality, and the effectiveness of drones as a counterterrorism strategy. My thesis will add to this body of literature, while providing a unique perspective based on the evolution of neorealist theory in response to the increasingly asymmetrical threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The subsequent section, Chapter 2, will first lay out a neorealist framework that will serve as the foundation of my analysis, and then Chapter 3 will delineate the U.S. rationale behind its use of drones and aggregate data on drone strikes in Pakistan from 2004 to 2014. Chapter 4 will detail the unintended consequences of drone strikes in Pakistan and the potentially destabilizing impacts they may pose. Finally, Chapter 5 will reevaluate neo- or structural realist theory in light of my findings and suggest policy alternatives that mitigate the asymmetrical threat of terrorism while decreasing the potential for perilous escalation.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This section outlines the theoretical framework that this thesis is built upon. In order to analyze and understand the complicated nature of international relations, it is critical to develop a theory that draws upon historical context as well as logical assumptions in order to then be able to explain a piece of existing world politics. This section will elucidate the lens through which the research will assess the international structure – neo- or structural realism. Establishing this baseline allows for an explanation of the data on drone strikes in Pakistan and of the potential consequence for U.S. foreign policy. While there are nuanced variations of neorealism, as there indeed are with classical realism, I will be narrowing my theoretical framework to align with Waltz's neorealism because the structural nature of his theory is applicable to the analysis of U.S. foreign policy and has explanatory power regarding the causes and effects of international

conflicts. According to Bellamy, the U.S. response to 9/11 was largely guided by realist principles.<sup>7</sup> Waltz concurs, positing that “as terrorists threaten both the state’s citizens and the way of life that it protects, a war against particular groups of terrorists is justified in terms of the state’s right to preserve itself.”<sup>8</sup> Fellow neorealist Robert Jervis wrote that Waltz’s framework “is theoretically grounded, parsimonious, and leads to testable propositions.”<sup>9</sup> While there exist competing theories such as liberal institutionalism and constructivism, and many have leveled strong criticisms against him, Waltz’s theories are intentionally simple and flexible.<sup>10</sup> Yet some have found fault with neorealism for that very reason. “How do neorealists deal with these objections?” Richard Ashley asks, “The answer, quite simply, is that they finesse them.”<sup>11</sup> In fact, much of the dissatisfaction with realism that Kegley describes later on remains with neorealism. Waltz has been forced to refine his structural theories in light of shifting and unprecedented global trends. Prior to 9/11, neorealists devoted little time to non-state actors such as terrorists, and historically have largely ignore the concept of legitimacy in foreign policy. These and other critiques of Waltz and other neorealist thinkers are valid. Yet the relative permanence of structural realism points to its power as a theory. Although Waltz has claimed that “his is not a theory of foreign policy,” neorealism can be used to understand contemporary security issues and refined to predict the consequences of U.S. responses to asymmetric threats.<sup>12</sup> The following sections will outline the main assumptions of neorealism and in Chapters 4 and 5 I will explore the ways in which neorealism can be evolved in light of the nature of the modern security dilemma.

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<sup>7</sup> Bellamy, A. J. 2005. 'Is The War On Terror Just?'. *International Relations* 19(3): 275-296.

<sup>8</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. 2003. 'Theory and International Politics: A Conversation with Kenneth Waltz'.

<sup>9</sup> Jervis, Robert. 1987. "The Contributions of President Kenneth N. Waltz". *PS* 20(4): 856.

<sup>10</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. 2004. "Neorealism: Confusions and Criticisms". *Journal of Politics & Society* XV: 2-6.

<sup>11</sup> Ashley, Richard K. 1984. "The Poverty of Neorealism". *International Organization* 38(02): 225.

<sup>12</sup> Barkin, Samuel. 2009. "Realism, Prediction, and Foreign Policy". *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5(3): 233-246.



## 2.1 Understanding Realism

Over the last half century, realism has been one of the prevailing international relations (IR) theories in the United States. Although its foundational concepts date back centuries to the works of Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes, realism wasn't formally and self-consciously theorized to a large degree until after World War II. In his book *Politics Among Nations*, Hans Morgenthau laid one important piece of the groundwork for realism in IR theory.<sup>13</sup> Morgenthau's concept of realism was based on key assumptions about human nature and the global system. Realists argue that in the anarchic international system (which is more or less assumed), states are the primary actors. They believe that the system itself generates conflict between sovereign states with varied capabilities working to ensure their own survival. For realists, states act rationally based on their own self-interests understood in terms of the pursuit of power. According to the late diplomat and realist thinker George F. Kennan, "[t]he interests of the national society for which government has to concern itself are basically those of its military security, the integrity of its political life and the well-being of its people."<sup>14</sup> To ensure the robustness of security and well-being, realism tells us that states pursue power, and ultimately power is the predictor of state behavior. According to Morgenthau, "international politics is of necessity power politics...[and] [t]he tendency to dominate, in particular, is an element of all human associations."<sup>15</sup> Classical realists, such as Reinhold Niebuhr, focus on the ways in which human nature, and the tendency to dominate, impact leaders' decisions and actions on behalf of the state.<sup>16</sup> While still a presidential candidate in 2007, Barack Obama praised Niebuhr's realist

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<sup>13</sup> Dougherty, James E, and Robert L Pfaltzgraff. 2001. *Contending Theories of International Relations*. 5th ed. Cambridge: Harper \* Row.

<sup>14</sup> Kennan, George F. 1985. 'Morality and Foreign Policy'. *Foreign Affairs* 64(2): 205.

<sup>15</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. 1967. *Politics among Nations*. New York: Knopf.

<sup>16</sup> Niebuhr, Reinhold. 1960. *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. New York: Scribner.

philosophy.<sup>17</sup> Morgenthau “regards the state as a collective reflection of political man’s lust for power and the unit which carries out its impulses at the international stage.”<sup>18</sup> Stephen M. Walt has noted that “[r]ealism emphasizes the enduring propensity for conflict between states,” and conflict, Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff explain, extends beyond competition.<sup>19</sup> “The term conflict usually refers to a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings...is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more identifiable human groups because these groups are pursuing what are or appear to be incompatible goals.”<sup>20</sup> Considering British imperialism, both World Wars, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons – it is tempting to assign a classical realist interpretation to much of modern history’s international conflicts. However, as Kegley notes, “[w]ell before the Cold War began to thaw – in the period when realism appeared applicable and accurate – many scholars warned that realism was incomplete, misdirected, nonrigorous, inconsistent with scientific evidence, conceptually confused, and incapable of accounting for international behavior in all issue-areas including even controversies surrounding the high politics of conflict, war, and peace.”<sup>21</sup> Theorists such as Kenneth Waltz, Robert Gilpin, and Robert Jervis, thus began refining the concepts within classical realism and highlighting the significance of structure to the study of power politics. This reframing of classical realism, called neo- or structural realism, is among the most influential theories in IR. “Indeed, neorealist theory represents an effort not only to draw from classical realism those elements of a theory adequate

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<sup>17</sup> Julian, Liam. 2009. 'Niebuhr and Obama'. *Policy Review* 154(April/May).

<sup>18</sup> Pashakhanlou, Arash. 2015. 'Comparing and Contrasting Classical Realism and Neorealism'. *E-International Relations*. <http://www.e-ir.info/2009/07/23/comparing-and-contrasting-classical-realism-and-neo-realism/> (26 September 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Walt, Stephen M. 1998. "International Relations: One World, Many Theories". *Foreign Policy* (110): 29.

<sup>20</sup> Dougherty, James E, and Robert L Pfaltzgraff. 2001. *Contending Theories of International Relations*. 5th ed. Cambridge: Harper \* Row.

<sup>21</sup> Kegley, Charles W. 1993. "The Neoidealist Moment in International Studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities: ISA Presidential Address March 27, 1993 Acapulco, Mexico". *International Studies Quarterly* 37(2): 131.

to the world of the late twentieth century, but also to link conceptually other theoretical efforts.”<sup>22</sup>

## 2.2 Neo- or Structural Realism

In 1979, Waltz published *Theory of International Politics*, a book that became widely accepted as the foundation of neorealist thought. His aim was to “inject greater rigor into the realist tradition by defining key concepts more clearly and consistently.”<sup>23</sup> For Waltz, the system was still defined by anarchy, and power remained a key concept; however neorealism’s explanatory power lies not in the underlying fact of human nature, but in the operation of the distribution of power in the international system itself. “In developing a theory of international politics, neorealism retains the main tenets of *realpolitik*, but means and ends are viewed differently, as are causes and effects.”<sup>24</sup> Waltz posited that “[t]o achieve their objectives and maintain their security, units in a condition of anarchy – be they people, corporations, states, or whatever – must rely on the means they can generate and the arrangements they can make for themselves. Self-help is necessarily the principle of action in an anarchic order.”<sup>25</sup> Neo- or structural realism, emphasizes the importance of the *structure* of the system over the inclinations and proclivities of the actors themselves – “indeed ‘human nature’ does not even appear in the index of *Theory of International Politics*.”<sup>26</sup> By deprioritizing human nature as a predictor of behavior, neorealism presents what is alleged by scholars to be a more realistic and consistent

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<sup>22</sup> Dougherty, James E, and Robert L Pfaltzgraff. 2001. *Contending Theories of International Relations*. 5th ed. Cambridge: Harper \* Row.

<sup>23</sup> Dougherty, James E, and Robert L Pfaltzgraff. 2001. *Contending Theories of International Relations*. 5th ed. Cambridge: Harper \* Row.

<sup>24</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1988. 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory'. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18(4): 615.

<sup>25</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

<sup>26</sup> Panitch, L. (2003). September 11 and the American Empire. *Interventions*, 5(2), 233-240.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369801031000112969>

assessment of state actions and intentions, as states can be analyzed in relation to their understanding of the incentives created by the structure of the international system, and more specifically, the distribution of power and capabilities within it. As Kupchan points out, “[n]eorealist, or structural, theory leads one to believe that the placement of states in the international system accounts for a good deal of their behavior.”<sup>27</sup> In a system with no governing entity, states are influenced by the actions and perceived intentions of other states and behave how they feel they must, given the nature of the global structure. In anarchy, states are free to do whatever they want, but they are limited by the consequences that may arise from the system. That it not to say that the international structure specifically *determines* state actions, Waltz clarifies, but rather that states are influenced by the system in their decision making.

Kupchan’s argument is compelling in an historical context. If not for the structural constraints on states like North Korea and Iran, for example, a nuclear attack on America or its allies may have occurred. Similarly, unilateral actions on the part of the U.S. over the last few decades may have been reconsidered given a different international structure. “Neorealism contends that international politics can be understood only if the effects of structure are added to the unit-level explanations of traditional realism.”<sup>28</sup> Mitsutomi provides a useful summarization of neorealism, writing, “all structural realists share a common conception of the world system that is defined according to four base assumptions: (1) the “primary political unit of an era” is the base unit of the system; (2) the structure is ordered according to the principle of anarchy and power; (3) the architecture of the system is defined at any given point in time according to the

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<sup>27</sup> Kupchan, Charles A. 2011. 'The False Promise of Unipolarity: Constraints on the Exercise of American Power'. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 24(2): 165-173.

<sup>28</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1988. 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory'. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18(4): 615.

number of great powers that populate the system; and (4) all state actors are rational actors.”<sup>29</sup> States therefore, cannot act based on their desires, rather they act as they must, given constraints and dispositions that are presented by the structure of power in the system. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, for instance, it did so not out of hatred for the U.S. or to force American participation in World War II, but out of a perceived necessity based on the international structure at the time. For Japan, “the United States, in cooperation with Britain, the Netherlands, and China, threatened Japan's security, deprived the nation of its important resources and imposed economic sanctions to the extent in which made it nearly impossible for Japan to survive peacefully.”<sup>30</sup> Despite ultimately losing the war, the attack on Pearl Harbor was Japan’s effort to secure its survival in the anarchic system.

### **2.3 The Anarchic Structure and the Need for Self-Help**

Neorealism’s main focus is the fact that the world is defined by a basic condition of anarchy. Despite criticism that anarchy as an IR concept is neither widely understood nor explained in terms of its genesis by structural theory, most scholars, both neorealist and otherwise, assume anarchy to be a basic truth in the international system.<sup>31</sup> Of course there are sovereign states with governing bodies and laws, and now there are even international norms and legal standards to which many states have agreed to adhere. It may appear that with the advent of the United Nations (UN), the International Criminal Court (ICC), and various other global institutions, there couldn’t possibly be a complete lack of order or utter chaos on worldwide scale. And to a degree, this is true. However, for Waltz, anarchy is more than chaos, rather it is

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<sup>29</sup> Mitsutomi, Yuichiro. 2011. 'Continuity and Change: Structural Realism and International Stability in the Information Age'.

<sup>30</sup> Dockrill, Saki. 1992. "Hirohito, the Emperor's Army and Pearl Harbor". *Review of International Studies* 18(04): 319-333.

<sup>31</sup> Milner, Helen. 1991. "The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique". *Review of International Studies* 17(01): 67.

“the absence of government,”<sup>32</sup> or the “absence of a central monopoly of legitimate force,”<sup>33</sup> which does in fact describe the world in which we live. There is no supranational entity by which states are bound to abide, no formal mechanism to control a state that strays from international norms. Without such an authority, states enjoy their own freedoms, but must also be cautious of the freedoms enjoyed by other, potentially more ambitious or even aggressive states. In *Realism and International Politics*, Waltz explains, “From the vantage point of neorealist theory, competition and conflict among states stem directly from the twin facts of life under conditions of anarchy: States in an anarchic order must provide for their own security, and threats or seeming threats to their security abound.”<sup>34</sup> In this system, terrorist organizations are free to plan and execute attacks on their perceived enemies, just as states like the U.S. is free to use tactics such as drone strikes to eliminate such threats. For neorealists, threats, both real and perceived, are a product of the international system and they guide the behavior of units within the system. As Mearscheimer notes, “the international system creates strong incentives for states to want additional increments of power to ensure their survival.”<sup>35</sup>

For states to survive, they must act in their own self-interest. “In anarchic realms,” Waltz suggests, “like units coact...the units are functionally similar and tend to remain so. Like units work to maintain a measure of independence and may even strive for autarchy.”<sup>36</sup> Anarchy ensures that states are in a constant state of worry about their future – will another state encroach on its borders, or worse, launch a violent offensive attack? This level of uncertainty guides the

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<sup>32</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

<sup>33</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1988. 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory'. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18(4): 615.

<sup>34</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 2008. *Realism and International Politics*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>35</sup> Dunne, Timothy, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith. 2007. *International Relations Theories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>36</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

actions that Waltz characterizes as “self-help.” Self-help is a valuable concept for understanding state behavior because, as neorealism contends, the main goal of states is self-preservation, and interstate relations are often characterized by the desire to balance competing aims. As Jakobsen notes “[t]he fundamental objective for any state is to survive – for if survival is not ensured, all other goals the state may have will be rendered unachievable.”<sup>37</sup> Put simply, to achieve survival is thus to maintain security. According to Waltz, “[s]elf-help is the principle of action in such an [anarchic] order, and the most important way in which states must help themselves is by providing for their own security.”<sup>38</sup> If security equals survival, then maintaining its national security is the top priority of any rational state. Obtaining power is thus the means, with the end being security. Security can be achieved and sustained both through internal and external measures, yet no matter the action, Waltz argues that states must actively pursue their own security lest they become vulnerable.

In order to understand the U.S. preference for drones as a counterterrorism mechanism in Pakistan, it is essential to explore the threat of terrorism in terms of self-help. Mearsheimer argues that, due to its focus on states as the main actors, realism has little to say about terrorism.<sup>39</sup> Indeed much of Waltz’s work was written prior to the GWOT and non-state actors are rarely explained through a structural lens, a fact that points to the need for some level of evolution in neorealism. Some believe however, that terrorism is a balancing behavior by units that are fighting back against marginalization. According to Boggs, “[t]he best and most intelligible framework for comprehending the expanded terrorist challenge today is that of

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<sup>37</sup> Jakobsen, J. (2013). *Neorealism in International Relations – Kenneth Waltz*. *POPULAR SOCIAL SCIENCE*. Retrieved 26 September 2015, from <http://www.popularsocialscience.com/2013/11/06/neorealism-in-international-relations-kenneth-waltz/>

<sup>38</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 2008. *Realism and International Politics*. New York: Routledge. p.63.

<sup>39</sup> Mearsheimer, John. 2002. 'Through the Realist Lens: Conversation with John Mearsheimer'.

‘blowback’ which, as Chalmers Johnson argues, views terrorism as the inevitable product of US global domination— violent reactions borne of horrendous imperial deeds and fueled by a profound alienation and sense of powerlessness that could be (and indeed were) foreseen.”<sup>40</sup> The underlying causes of terrorism are extremely complicated, yet Butko goes so far as to argue that terrorism should be redefined as “counter-hegemonic political violence.”<sup>41</sup> Though it is a simplified assumption, we might interpret terrorist organizations as units within the anarchic system that are seeking to gain power and ensure their own survival in the face of U.S. unipolarity. “So if [terrorist organizations] believe that their security is directly in danger and even, indeed, specifically from the United States...they are going to do everything they can to acquire deterrent weapons.”<sup>42</sup> Violent attacks are therefore a means to an end for terrorist organizations. “It is significant,” *Foreign Policy* reports, “that al Qaeda’s lists of objectives do not mention attacking the United States or its allies. Rather, attacking the U.S. is presented as a way to achieve these goals.”<sup>43</sup> So, just like other states, terrorist organizations engage in behaviors that they determine to align with their need for self-help.

As part of its strategy to reduce its vulnerability to terrorist attacks and bolster national security – to help itself – the U.S. has used targeted drone strikes in Pakistan over the last decade. Jakobsen suggests that “[a]s rational actors – or at least we should assume that they are rational actors – states tend, over the long haul at least, to choose the means that best help to realize their objectives.”<sup>44</sup> The Bush and Obama administrations have determined that drone strikes are one

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<sup>40</sup> Boggs, C. (2002). Militarism and Terrorism: The Deadly Cycle. *Democracy & Nature*, 8(2), 241-259. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10855660220148598>

<sup>41</sup> Butko, Thomas. 2006. 'Terrorism Redefined'. *Peace Review* 18(1): 145-151.

<sup>42</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. 2003. 'Theory and International Politics: A Conversation with Kenneth Waltz'.

<sup>43</sup> Habeck, Mary. 2012. 'What Does Al Qaeda Want?'. *Foreign Policy*. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/03/06/what-does-al-qaeda-want/> (12 October 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Jakobsen, J. (2013). *Neorealism in International Relations – Kenneth Waltz*. *POPULAR SOCIAL SCIENCE*. Retrieved 26 September 2015, from <http://www.popularsocialscience.com/2013/11/06/neorealism-in-international-relations-kenneth-waltz/>



of the means to accomplish the U.S. objective of defeating a fleeting, adaptive non-state enemy. “A self-help situation,” Waltz posits, “is one of high risk – of bankruptcy in the economic realm and of war in a world of free states.”<sup>45</sup> There is a delicate balance to maintaining security in an anarchic system because a state can only know its own intentions. The U.S. can presume the intentions of terrorist organizations and their reactions to the threat of drone strikes, but it must constantly reassess the consequences of such behavior on its long term security. “Because states coexist in a self-help system, they are free to do any fool thing they care to, but they are likely to be rewarded for behavior that is responsive to structural pressures and punished for behavior that is not.”<sup>46</sup> The external assessment of state behavior, however, is complicated by the intense distrust that exists among states. There exists an almost ironic cycle in which a state must pursue power in the name of security while simultaneously influencing other states to challenge that power to maintain their own security. This paradox is known as the “security dilemma.”

## 2.4 The Security Dilemma

For IR scholars across many schools of thought, the concept of the security dilemma is one of the most crucial to an understanding of the dynamic relationships among states in the international system. Neo- or structural realist scholars, specifically, focus on the security dilemma to account for the sources of conflict between units in the anarchical state system. Theorized most recently by John Herz, Herbert Butterfield, and Robert Jervis in the decades following the end of World War II, the security dilemma stems from the frequently observed fact that a state’s primary aim is to maintain not its power, but its security and thereby to procure its survival. Waltz characterizes the security dilemma as a “vicious circle” in which one state’s

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<sup>45</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. p. 111

<sup>46</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 2008. *Realism and International Politics*. New York: Routledge. p. 88.

security necessitates others' insecurity.<sup>47</sup> When a state's means for maintaining security are primarily weapons and the threat of force, what may be intended by one state as internal fortification may appear as aggressive posturing to a neighboring state. More formally, Herz defined the security dilemma as "[a] structural notion in which the self-help attempts of states to look after their security needs tend, regardless of intention, to lead to rising insecurity for others as each interprets its own measures as defensive and measures of others as potentially threatening."<sup>48</sup> States are, therefore, engaged in a constant calculation, both consciously and unconsciously, regarding the intentions of other states, and must respond in such a way that aligns with their own interests (i.e., security and survival). Robert Gilpin explains that this calculation is complicated by the fact that "power by its very nature is a relative matter in a zero-sum contest: one state's gain in power is by necessity another's loss."<sup>49</sup>

Neorealists point to the Cold War as a prime example of the security dilemma in practice because it exemplified the intense mistrust that exists among states and demonstrated the various ways in which states can project power as a means to their security. The tension caused by the security dilemma is palpably felt in almost all aspects of international relations, even among allies. There is never complete trust among units in an anarchical system. "Having armed for the sake of security," Waltz explains, "states feel less secure and buy more arms because the means to anyone's security is a threat to someone else who in turn responds by arming."<sup>50</sup> These assessments of and reactions to the security seeking of other units can take many forms, such as balancing or bandwagoning – and states can easily overreact to perceived threats or underreact to real threats. When the authenticity or significance of a potential threat is unknown, states assess

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<sup>47</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. p. 186

<sup>48</sup> Herz, John H. 1950. "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma". *World Pol.* 2(02): 157-180.

<sup>49</sup> Gilpin, Robert. 1981. *War and Change in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>50</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. p. 186

the risks of each possible reaction, especially because the wrong response, though intended to augment a state's security, may in fact generate insecurity in either the short or long terms. Jervis sums up this analysis of alternatives that states conduct, suggesting that "[w]hat states have to care most about in setting their security policies is how the adversary is likely to react to alternative policies that they could follow."<sup>51</sup> The security dilemma therefore rests on a delicate balance of interpreting intentions, assessing the risks of potential reactions, and dealing with the consequences, both intended and not, of the continued cycle of uncertainty that plagues relationships between units in the anarchical system. When states respond to potential threats with behavior that, in their opinion, is in their own self-interest, they do not intend to overreact or escalate tensions. Indeed neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union set out to engage in a nuclear arms race, but the Cold War was a result of the security dilemma that is created by the anarchic international structure. Waltz notes that "[t]he origins of hot wars lie in cold wars, and the origins of cold wars are found in the anarchic ordering of the international arena."<sup>52</sup>

Yet the security dilemma doesn't mean that all states engage in isolationism nor does it suggest that states are always a second away from a war with their neighbors. "A relative harmony can, and sometimes does, prevail among nations," Waltz concedes.<sup>53</sup> Indeed there do exist a variety of interstate alliances as well as a healthy level of international cooperation and mutual assistance. In a globalized society, there is interdependence. But Waltz would argue that this is a product of the anarchic structure – sometimes it is in a state's self-interest to engage externally in ways that benefit both that state and others. Neorealism is not therefore incompatible with a stable and interconnected world, but according to Waltz, "[r]ules,

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<sup>51</sup> Jervis, Robert. 2011. "Dilemmas about Security Dilemmas". *Security Studies* 20(3): 416-423.

<sup>52</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1988. 'The Origins Of War In Neorealist Theory'. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18(4): 615.

<sup>53</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1993. 'The Emerging Structure of International Politics'. *International Security* 18(2): 44.

institutions, and patterns of cooperation, when they develop in self-help systems, are all limited in extent and modified from what they might otherwise be.”<sup>54</sup> The caveat is that such cooperation is not mandated by a higher authority and relies on the goodwill of states to be preserved. “Peace is maintained by a delicate balance of internal and external restraints. States having a surplus of power are tempted to use it, and weaker states fear their doing so.”<sup>55</sup> Peace is possible, but for neorealists, it is fragile and fleeting.

While the security dilemma remains a critical concept that helps explain international relations today, the Strategic Studies Institute posits that “contemporary realities have given rise to a new, broad, complicated, and more ambiguous security dilemma.”<sup>56</sup> Indeed the threats, both perceived and real, that the U.S. has faced in recent years, and which it continues to confront, are often asymmetric in nature. Lee explains that asymmetric conflict occurs when “a potential opponent--a state, a transnational group, or various other types of non-state actors--seeks to counter the superior technology or firepower of a superpower with unconventional, asymmetric means.”<sup>57</sup> Terrorism is therefore an asymmetrical threat to the U.S., and as Yoo points out, “the willingness to fight sometimes overcomes the disadvantage of military capabilities in asymmetric warfare.”<sup>58</sup> The Cold War was, by contrast, a symmetrical conflict, one in which two more or less equally powerful states engaged in a series of security seeking and defensive behaviors. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were in possession of nuclear arsenals capable of destroying one another. Thus, both the threat and the potential response were similar and roughly

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<sup>54</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 2008. *Realism and International Politics*. New York: Routledge. p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 2000. 'Structural Realism after the Cold War'. *International Security* 25(1): 5-41.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Army War College. 2011. *The Strategic Logic of the Contemporary Security Dilemma*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute.

<sup>57</sup> Lee, Sang-Hyun. 2003. "Terrorism and Asymmetric War: Is North Korea a Threat?". *East Asia* 20(2).

<sup>58</sup> Yoo, Sangbeom. 2012. "Counterinsurgency and Conventional Warfare: Accounting For Changes in Military Doctrine". Ph.D. Binghamton University.

equal, or symmetrical, in nature. Paraphrasing the thinking of Nietzsche, scholars Kimbrough, Sheremeta, and Shields argue that “peace and justice are most easily negotiated when the costs of conflict are highest, or when opponents are evenly matched.”<sup>59</sup> In the context of asymmetrical conflict, it would follow that peace and justice are more difficult to achieve. The idea that parity promotes peace is one that aligns with neorealist conceptualization of balance of power.

## 2.5 Balance of Power and Stability

It is the delicate, yet constant calculation on behalf of each state that culminates in what is referred to as “balance of power.” There are many different interpretations of the concept, and the validity of balance of power theory has been criticized due to the lack of a cohesive definition.<sup>60</sup> Realism argues that balance of power is a self-defense mechanism, and for neorealists, “[b]alance of power politics prevail wherever two, and only two, requirements are met: that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive.”<sup>61</sup> <sup>62</sup> States’ goals may not entail balancing power as an outright aim, however Waltz suggests that the manner in which states are influenced to behave by the anarchic structure tends to lead to a balance of power. When questioned about the continued validity of balance of power in a 1998 interview, Waltz explained, “States try to maintain their position in the system. For me that's an axiom. It's derived from balance-of-power theory. Now, there's nothing in anybody's theory, of anything, that says you'll succeed. It indicates what you are likely to try to do, and what will happen to you if you don't manage to do it.”<sup>63</sup> For Waltz, “the balance of power is rooted

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<sup>59</sup> Kimbrough, Erik O., Roman M. Sheremeta, and Timothy W. Shields. 2004. "When Parity Promotes Peace: Resolving Conflict Between Asymmetric Agents". *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 99.

<sup>60</sup> Dougherty, James E, and Robert L Pfaltzgraff. 2001. *Contending Theories of International Relations*. 5th ed. Cambridge: Harper \* Row.

<sup>61</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. 1967. *Politics among Nations*. New York: Knopf.

<sup>62</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. p. 121

<sup>63</sup> Halliday, Fred, and Justin Rosenberg. 1998. "Interview with Ken Waltz". *Review of International Studies* 24(3): 371-386.

inescapably and necessarily in the international system of states.”<sup>64</sup> Balance of power is not synonymous with peace, but rather with some level of stability – balanced power mitigates to some degree the anarchy of the international system. As Henry Kissinger notes, “[a] key proposition derived from realist theory is that international politics reflects the distribution of national capabilities...Another key proposition is that the balancing of power by some states against others recurs.”<sup>65</sup> Like Kissinger, Waltz argues that power is determined by evaluating the national capabilities of states in comparison to one another. As states themselves assess their own capabilities alongside those of other states, they act in their own self-interest, however they determine that to be, such that their power is maintained or augmented. Miscalculations of the distribution of capabilities is the crux of the security dilemma and can impact the balance of power. In fact, Waltz goes so far as to say that such miscalculations based on uncertainty cause wars.<sup>66</sup> “The means employed to maintain the equilibrium,” Morgenthau explains, “consist in allowing the different elements to pursue their opposing tendencies up to the point where the tendency of one is not so strong as to overcome the tendency of the others but strong enough to prevent the others from overcoming its own.”<sup>67</sup> As a result, balances of power can assume many different forms based on intentional and unintentional consequences of state behavior. The current condition of the balance of power, which has been in place since the end of the Cold War, is unipolarity, as the U.S. is the sole super power. In neorealism, power is not the end goal, but rather a tool to obtain security and ensure long term survival. “For Waltz, therefore, pursuing a policy of restraint whereby the equilibrium at the point of constant returns is maintained (cost of

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<sup>64</sup> Dougherty, James E, and Robert L Pfaltzgraff. 2001. *Contending Theories of International Relations*. 5th ed. Cambridge: Harper \* Row.

<sup>65</sup> Kissinger, Henry. 2015. *World Order*. New York: Penguin Books.

<sup>66</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. p. 168.

<sup>67</sup> Morgenthau, Hans J. 1967. *Politics among Nations*. New York: Knopf.

one unit of power equals a return of one unit of security) is the optimal policy for security-seeking states.”<sup>68</sup> Johnson agrees, calling “prudence” the “most important virtue in the conduct of international relations.”<sup>69</sup> In determining the optimal counterterrorism strategy to sustain national security, the U.S. concluded that conducting drone strikes in Pakistan to eliminate terrorists and dismantle their organizations would be the most prudent option. In reality, however, the impacts of drone strikes in Pakistan may prove to be a destabilizing factor for the existing balance of power.

### **3. Drone Strikes in Pakistan 2004 – 2014**

Immediately following 9/11, the Bush Administration implemented the Authorization for Use of Military Force against Terrorists, which not only served as the justification for Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan War), but also set in motion a prolonged strategy of identifying and eliminating terrorists throughout the world. The attacks modified America’s domestic structure such that Executive powers were strengthened in the short term (via the Bush Doctrine) and foreign policy strategies became wholly focused on combating terrorism and preventing terrorist organizations from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. “To some, terrorism represented a new type of threat, a resurgent cold war in which states were pitted against ruthless nonstate actors that would use any means—including weapons of mass destruction—to undermine or even destroy global society.”<sup>70</sup> The U.S. response to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the Global War on Terror (GWOT), addressed this new form of threat, one not recognized as a legitimate state. Terrorist organizations, such as al Qaeda, which claimed responsibility for the

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<sup>68</sup> Mitsutomi, Yuichiro. 2011. 'Continuity and Change: Structural Realism and International Stability in the Information Age'.

<sup>69</sup> Johnson, Chalmers. 2000. *Blowback*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

<sup>70</sup> Smith, Paul J. 2011. "The China–Pakistan–United States Strategic Triangle: From Cold War to the “War on Terrorism”". *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 38(4): 197-220.

9/11 attacks, are unique in a world organized by statehood. Terrorism has existed long before 9/11, but “[w]hen [the U.S.] realized just how competent and dangerous [al Qaeda was], [it] then began to hypothesize what might happen if they got ahold of weapons of mass destruction, and particularly, if they got ahold of nuclear weapons.”<sup>71</sup> Smith characterizes terrorism as taking place in the space between states, yet states must view terrorist organizations as units that could threaten their security and their survival.<sup>72</sup> “From a strategic perspective,” according to Ellis, “al Qaeda represents the most potentially dangerous type of adversary. It is an anti-system, revisionist actor that rejects the territorial integrity of most Middle Eastern countries and the normative and political basis of the world order.”<sup>73</sup> The potential threat posed by al Qaeda ensured that the U.S. would respond, not only to avenge the casualties suffered on 9/11, but to prevent future insecurity and maintain power on a global scale. As part of the U.S. strategy to manage this threat and contain terrorist organizations, the Bush and Obama administrations have turned to unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones. Oblinger explains that “[drone strikes]’ main purposes have remained the same since 2004: to cripple militant and terrorist efforts, to protect U.S. and allied forces in the border region, and to put pressure on enemy combatants who operate in the region.”<sup>74</sup> Though UAVs in various forms have been in existence since World War I, the last decade has seen the use of drones skyrocket.<sup>75</sup> “In Bush’s new order, the United States is governed by the requirements of national security and imperatives of war, and it judges the

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<sup>71</sup> Mearsheimer, John. 2002. 'Through the Realist Lens: Conversation with John Mearsheimer'.

<sup>72</sup> Smith, S. 2002. 'The End of the Unipolar Moment? September 11 and the Future of World Order'. *International Relations* 16(2): 171-183.

<sup>73</sup> Ellis, D. (2009). U.S. Grand Strategy Following the George W. Bush Presidency. *International Studies Perspectives*, 10(4), 361-377. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1528-3585.2009.00383.x>

<sup>74</sup> Oblinger, A. (2011). The Moral, Legal, and Diplomatic Implications of Drone Warfare in Pakistan. Retrieved from ProQuest.

<sup>75</sup> Love, P. (2011). The UAV question and answer book: An overview of the predators, reapers and other unmanned aerial systems that are changing the face of aviation. S.I.: Ioxbooks.



behavior and the relevance of other actors and instruments in those contexts.”<sup>76</sup> Indeed a key aspect of the Bush administration’s 2006 strategy for winning the War on Terror was that the first tactic for preventing terrorist attacks was to offensively “attack terrorists and their capability to operate.”<sup>77</sup> And the Obama administration has followed suit. The 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism claimed that the U.S. is “bringing targeted force to bear on al-Qa‘ida.”<sup>78</sup> In neorealist terms, the U.S. is attempting to help itself, largely by unilateral measures such as drone strikes, maintain security and retain the power it has enjoyed under unipolarity.

### 3.1 The Rationale behind Drone Strikes

The U.S. analysis of the alternative responses to the threat of terrorism and the decision to use targeted strikes in Pakistan can be understood through neorealism. From the perspective of the Bush and Obama administrations, drones appeared to be a revolutionary technological advancement that created a “win-win” situation for America – they give the U.S. the ability to address the threat of terrorism while protecting the lives of the soldiers that would have previously been sent into battle. Summarizing this rationale, Kenneth Anderson explains that “in conjunction with high-quality intelligence, drone warfare offers an unparalleled means to strike directly at terrorist organizations without needing a conventional or counterinsurgency approach to reach terrorist groups in their safe havens.”<sup>79</sup> An unnamed U.S. official lauded drone strikes, which were first carried out in 2004, as “the purest form of self-defense.”<sup>80</sup> In Pakistan, which has been the site of the most drone strikes over the last decade, the U.S. has targeted both the

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<sup>76</sup> Miller, Steven. 2005. 'Terrifying Thoughts: Power, Order, And Terror After 9/11'. *Global Governance* 11: 247-271.

<sup>77</sup> The White House. 2006. *National Strategy For Combating Terrorism*. Washington, DC: The White House.

<sup>78</sup> The White House. 2011. *National Strategy For Counterterrorism*. Washington, DC: The White House.

<sup>79</sup> Anderson, K. (2013, June 1). The Case for Drones. Retrieved from <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-case-for-drones/>

<sup>80</sup> Shane, S., & Schmitt, E. (2010, January 22). C.I.A. Deaths Prompt Surge in U.S. Drone Strikes. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/23/world/asia/23drone.html>

Taliban, al Qaeda, and more recently, the Haqqani Network, “an Afghan faction notorious for truck bombs and other high-profile attacks on Afghan and U.S. government and military installations in Afghanistan.”<sup>81</sup> Pakistan is key to U.S. counterterrorism efforts because “many of the violent extremists, members and affiliates of al Qaeda, have crossed borders from Afghanistan to Pakistan, including Osama bin Laden. Additionally, it is believed al Qaeda is using the Pakistani terrain to train terrorists, plot attacks, and communicate with its followers. It is also assumed that fighters are being sent from Pakistan to support terrorism in Afghanistan.”<sup>82</sup> The U.S. has not, however, engaged in a war with Pakistan. In fact, Pakistan remains an American ally that has promised its support of U.S. counterterrorism missions, due in part of the millions of dollars in aid the U.S. distributes to the Pakistani government. Already engaged in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. adopted a strategy for addressing terrorist organizations in Pakistan that did not involve a full-scale war. Instead, since 2004, the U.S. has relied on the surveillance and lethal targeting capabilities of armed drones, using a rationale that aligns with a neorealist framework. Peter Beinart characterized foreign policy strategy under the Obama administration as “offshore balancing,” meaning that the U.S. relies not on land-based invasions but on asymmetric responses to threats. Beinart suggests that offshore balancing “reemerges when the money and bravado have run out,” as they had in the midst and wake of two costly and ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>83</sup> “The key characteristic of a unipolar world,” according to Waltz, “is that there are no checks and balances against that power, so it's free to follow its

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<sup>81</sup> Hussein, Tom. 2014. 'In Revenge, Pakistani Taliban Strike School, Killing At Least 141'. *mcclatchydc*. <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/middle-east/article24777508.html> (24 October 2015).

<sup>82</sup> Freeman, Shauna. 2012. 'Realism in the Context of Contemporary International Security from the United States Perspective'. Ph.D. Howard University.

<sup>83</sup> Beinart, Peter. 2011. "Obama's Foreign Policy Doctrine Finally Emerges With 'Offshore Balancing'". *The Daily Beast*. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/11/28/obama-s-foreign-policy-doctrine-finally-emerges-with-off-shore-balancing.html> (27 November 2015).

fancy, it's free to act on its whims.”<sup>84</sup> The U.S. therefore is utilizing the strategies that it perceives to be best for ensuring the security of the American people and its survival. Leon Panetta, former Director of the CIA, solidified this rationale in 2009, saying of drone strikes, “Very frankly, it’s the only game in town in terms of confronting and trying to disrupt the Al Qaeda leadership.”<sup>85</sup>

Yet despite the uptick in armed strikes, the U.S. government, under both the Bush and Obama administrations, has remained mostly silent on the details of its drone campaign. In fact, it was not until 2012 that the U.S. acknowledged such a drone program existed. John Brennan, former counterterrorism advisor to President Obama and current Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), confirmed speculation that the administration used drones, explaining, albeit vaguely, that it did so legally and “in order to prevent terrorist attacks on the United States and to save American lives.”<sup>86</sup> Brennan’s imprecision is indicative of the administration’s desire to keep the drone program, which is in fact largely controlled by the CIA, under wraps.<sup>87</sup> This shroud of secrecy is seemingly due in large part to the fact that armed drones are a new frontier for American foreign policy and warfare. Though the U.S. has in the past circumvented international law, as Jon Frappier points out, lethal targeting of both U.S. citizens abroad and foreign nationals using drones is of ambiguous legality under the Geneva Conventions.<sup>88</sup> As such, details such as the number of strikes carried out, their intended targets, and the number and identities of individuals injured or killed remain classified. The *Washington*

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<sup>84</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. 2003. 'Theory and International Politics: A Conversation with Kenneth Waltz'.

<sup>85</sup> Gardner, Lloyd C. 2013. *Killing Machine: The American Presidency in the Age of Drone Warfare*. New York: The New Press.

<sup>86</sup> Brennan, John O. “The Ethics and Efficacy of the President’s Counterterrorism Strategy.” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC. 30 April 2012.

<sup>87</sup> Currier, Cora. 2013. 'Everything We Know So Far About Drone Strikes'. *ProPublica*. <http://www.propublica.org/article/everything-we-know-so-far-about-drone-strikes> (21 October 2015).

<sup>88</sup> Frappier, Jon. 1984. 'Above the Law: Violations of International Law by the U.S. Government from Truman to Reagan'. *Crime and Social Justice* 21/22.

*Post* reports that “[t]he U.S. government has never publicly disclosed its own count of the number of deaths attributable to drone operations outside the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan over the past 14 years.”<sup>89</sup> “And after promising to make counterterrorism operations more transparent and rein in executive power, Obama has arguably done the opposite, maintaining secrecy and expanding presidential authority.”<sup>90</sup> Citing Jaffer, Rohde alludes to the fact that such secrecy may be strategic as it allows the tactic to remain outside the jurisdiction of judicial review.<sup>91</sup> “Much of the resistance to increased disclosure has come from the CIA, which has argued that the release of any information about the program, particularly on how targets are chosen and strikes approved, would aid the enemy;” and in September 2009, a federal judge sided with the CIA on the matter.<sup>92</sup> From a neorealist perspective, the U.S. may view total secrecy as a form of self-help, a strategy to ensure that American power is not diminished through the leaking of classified information. But in order to evaluate the success drone strikes as a counterterrorism tactic in Pakistan through a structural lens, it is important to understand what’s happening and to explore the potential effects on the stability of the international system. Despite the intense secrecy, however, there has been a growing effort on the part of journalists and international organizations to track and record publically the incidents of drone strikes and the number of victims. The following section provides an aggregation of such data from a broad range of sources.

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<sup>89</sup> Miller, Greg, and Julie Tate. 2015. 'U.S. Government’s Refusal to Discuss Drone Attacks Comes under Fire'. *Washington Post*. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-silence-on-drone-strikes-comes-under-pressure-after-hostage-deaths/2015/04/24/cb48e9d4-eea7-11e4-aae1-d642717d8afa\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-silence-on-drone-strikes-comes-under-pressure-after-hostage-deaths/2015/04/24/cb48e9d4-eea7-11e4-aae1-d642717d8afa_story.html) (18 October 2015).

<sup>90</sup> Rohde, D. (2012). The Obama Doctrine: How the President's Secret Wars are Backfiring. *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2012(192), 65-69. Retrieved from ProQuest.

<sup>91</sup> Rohde, D. (2012). The Obama Doctrine: How the President's Secret Wars are Backfiring. *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2012(192), 65-69. Retrieved from ProQuest.

<sup>92</sup> DeYoung, K. (2011, December 19). Secrecy defines Obama's drone war. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/secrecy-defines-obamas-drone-war/2011/10/28/gIQAPKNR5O\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/secrecy-defines-obamas-drone-war/2011/10/28/gIQAPKNR5O_story.html)

### 3.2 The Data on Drone Strikes and Their Targets

In an interconnected world with widespread access to the internet, it is difficult to suppress the knowledge that a drone strike was carried out in Pakistan, especially when many journalists are on the ground reporting. The Bush administration never publicly discussed the U.S. drone program, despite strikes in Pakistan being well documented over the course of Bush's final term. The Obama administration first admitted to using drone strikes eight years after the first strike was carried out, saying, "[W]e conduct targeted strikes because they are necessary to mitigate an actual ongoing threat, to stop plots, prevent future attacks, and to save American lives."<sup>93</sup> And although the administration now acknowledges strikes when they are identified in the news media and provides "general assertions of extremely low civilian casualties,"<sup>94</sup> official statistics are currently classified. In the absence of transparent communication about U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, the London Bureau of Investigative Journalism (LBIJ), the Long War Journal (LWJ), and the New America Foundation (NAF) have compiled data from sources on the ground in Pakistan and maintain active statistics. These three organizations are some of, if not the, only sources of comprehensive data dating back to 2004 and are updated with each strike. Their assessments are detailed in **Table 1**.

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<sup>93</sup> Brennan, John. 2012. 'The Ethics and Efficacy of the President's Counterterrorism Strategy'. Presented at the Wilson Center, Washington, DC.

<sup>94</sup> Columbia Law School. 2012. *Counting Drone Strike Deaths*. New York: Human Rights Clinic at Columbia Law School.

**Table 1. Aggregate Data on Drone Strikes in Pakistan 2004-2014<sup>95</sup>**

| <b>Data<br/>(2004 – 2014)</b>                        | <b>The Bureau of<br/>Investigative<br/>Journalism<sup>96</sup></b> | <b>The Long War<br/>Journal<sup>97</sup></b> | <b>The New America<br/>Foundation<sup>98</sup></b> |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Number of Strikes in<br/>Pakistan</b>             | 408  | 378  | 391  |
| <b>Total Individuals Killed</b>                      | 2,416 – 3,904<br>(average 3,160)                                   | 2,872  | 2,201 – 3,575<br>(average 2,888)                   |
| <b>Militants Killed</b>                              | 1,995 – 2,944<br>(average 2,469.5)                                 | 2,716  | 1,747 – 2,938<br>(average 2,343.5)                 |
| <b>Civilians Killed<br/>(including unidentified)</b> | 421 – 960<br>(average 690.5)                                       | 156  | 454 – 637<br>(average 545.5)                       |
| <b>Percentage of Killed<br/>Civilians (rounded)</b>  | 17% - 25%<br>(average 21%)   | 5%   | 18% – 21%<br>(average 19.5%)                       |
| <b>Individuals Injured</b>                           | 1,113 – 1,706  | Not reported                                 | Not reported                                       |

As a report by Columbia Law School’s Human Rights Clinic notes, “[t]here is no standard definition that the media sources use to categorize a person as militant or a civilian, nor a standardized measure by which the media sources weigh and corroborate their information.”<sup>99</sup> In addition, some have criticized these organizations for the quality of their data, suggesting that information from media reports, potentially biased sources, and anonymous Pakistani officials may not represent an accurate depiction of drone strikes in Pakistan.<sup>100</sup> Of the three organizations, the London Bureau of Investigative Journalism cites the most sources in its

<sup>95</sup> Because these sources’ aggregate data often included statistics from 2015 and because different types of statistics were reported across each source, this table represents my own aggregation and calculations of data from the three groups.

<sup>96</sup> The Bureau’s sources are too extensive to list in detail here, but can be found at <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2011/08/10/pakistan-drone-strikes-the-methodology2/>

<sup>97</sup> According to the Long War Journal, the data is obtained from press reports from the Pakistani press (*Daily Times*, *Dawn*, *Geo News*, *The News*, and other outlets), as well as wire reports (*AFP*, *Reuters*, etc.), as well as reporting from *The Long War Journal*.

<sup>98</sup> According to the New America Foundation, the data is obtained from major international wire services (Agence France Presse, Associated Press, Reuters), the leading regional newspapers (*Dawn*, *Express Times*, *The News*, *Yemen Observer*, *Yemen Post*), leading South Asian and Middle Eastern TV networks (*Geo TV* and *Al Jazeera*), and Western media outlets with extensive in-country reporting capabilities (*BBC*, *CNN*, *The Guardian*, *LA Times*, *New York Times*, *Telegraph*, *Washington Post*).

<sup>99</sup> Columbia Law School. 2012. *Counting Drone Strike Deaths*. New York: Human Rights Clinic at Columbia Law School.

<sup>100</sup> Braun, Meg. 2012. 'Counting Civilian Casualties in CIA’S Drone War'. *Foreign Policy*. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/11/02/counting-civilian-casualties-in-cias-drone-war/> (5 October 2015).

statistics and reporting on individual strikes, followed by the New America Foundation and then the Long War Journal. The LBIJ has openly criticized the New America Foundation, whose Director Peter Bergen is also CNN's national security analyst, for generating misleading numbers of civilian casualties.<sup>101</sup> Much of the debate stems from inconsistent characterizations of what constitutes a "militant." When surveying the damage done by a drone strike, the Obama administration considers all military-age males to be militants, unless otherwise identified posthumously, which the government rarely expends much effort to do.<sup>102</sup> The New America Foundation categorizes militants in a similar fashion, and the Long War Journal only collects the aggregate number of civilian casualties, making it difficult to determine how militants are distinguished from civilians. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism on the other hand considers militants to be "all organised, named groups that bear arms and that are not part of Pakistani...military, police, paramilitary or militia forces," which means that unknown individuals who may be civilians are counted as such.<sup>103</sup> Of similar concern when determining casualty counts is the execution of "signature strikes." Signature strikes, sometimes referred to as "personality" strikes, target "groups of men who bear certain signatures, or defining characteristics associated with terrorist activity, but whose identities aren't known."<sup>104</sup> The Obama administration has "declined to discuss the use of signature strikes, which are based on intelligence showing suspicious behavior rather than confirmation of the location of someone on

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<sup>101</sup> Woods, Chris. 2012. 'Analysis: CNN Expert's Civilian Drone Death Numbers Don't Add Up | The Bureau of Investigative Journalism'. *Thebureauinvestigates.com*. <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2012/07/17/analysis-cnn-experts-civilian-drone-death-numbers-dont-add-up/> (5 October 2015).

<sup>102</sup> Becker, Jo, and Scott Shane. 2012. 'Secret 'Kill List' Tests Obama's Principles'. *Nytimes.com*. [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-qaeda.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-qaeda.html?_r=0) (18 October 2015).

<sup>103</sup> The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. 2011. 'Covert US Strikes In Pakistan, Yemen And Somalia – Our Methodology | The Bureau Of Investigative Journalism'. *Thebureauinvestigates.com*. <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2011/08/10/pakistan-drone-strikes-the-methodology2/> (5 October 2015).

<sup>104</sup> INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION CLINIC AT STANFORD LAW SCHOOL AND GLOBAL JUSTICE CLINIC AT NYU SCHOOL OF LAW, LIVING UNDER DRONES: DEATH, INJURY, AND TRAUMA TO CIVILIANS FROM US DRONE PRACTICES IN PAKISTAN (2012).

the CIA or military target list.”<sup>105</sup> “The joke was that when the C.I.A. sees “three guys doing jumping jacks,” the agency thinks it is a terrorist training camp, said one senior official. Men loading a truck with fertilizer could be bombmakers — but they might also be farmers, skeptics argued.”<sup>106</sup>

Such debates are important to acknowledge and the determination of civilian casualties is a legitimate concern, however without official statistics, these sources represent the range of potential casualties based on various methodologies. All three of these sources estimate total casualties at a similar range through the end of 2014 – at least 2,201 individuals (NAF) on the low end and as many as 3,904 (LBIJ) on the high side. Where they differ, both among sources and within individual source ranges, is on the proportion of civilian casualties. The lowest estimate of civilian casualties comes unofficially from the U.S. government itself. As noted in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2011, “[the CIA] tells U.S. and Pakistani officials that there have been very few civilian deaths—only 60 over the years. But some senior officials in both governments privately say they are skeptical that civilian deaths have been that low.”<sup>107</sup> The Long War Journal reports the lowest estimate of the three sources at 156 civilian deaths, just over 5% of the total casualties the same group counted. The highest estimate, at 960 civilian deaths, by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, puts the ratio at approximately a quarter of estimated casualties overall. Some CIA officials balk at the numbers presented by these organizations, saying they are inflated

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<sup>105</sup> Miller, G. (2012, April 30). Brennan speech is first Obama acknowledgment of use of armed drones. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/brennan-speech-is-first-obama-acknowledgement-of-use-of-armed-drones/2012/04/30/gIQAq7B4rT\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/brennan-speech-is-first-obama-acknowledgement-of-use-of-armed-drones/2012/04/30/gIQAq7B4rT_story.html)

<sup>106</sup> Becker, J., & Shane, S. (2012, May 28). Secret ‘Kill List’ Proves a Test of Obama’s Principles and Will. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-qaeda.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

<sup>107</sup> Entous, Adam, Siobhan Gorman, and Julian Barnes. 2011. 'U.S. Tightens Drone Rules'. *Wall Street Journal*. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204621904577013982672973836> (5 October 2015).



and that the alternative, a ground invasion, would result in even higher civilian casualties.<sup>108</sup> The average percentage of civilian deaths reported by the three sources above is approximately 15%, which is indeed lower, than most wars throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>109</sup> But the U.S. is not at war with Pakistan, and while it may be abstractly at war with terrorism, even those individuals accurately categorized as militants may have no affiliation with al Qaeda or the Taliban. In fact, the Center for the Study of the Drone at Bard College found that “of the 2,500 – 3,500 estimated deaths from drones in Pakistan, 70 individuals—around 2.3%—were ranking members of al-Qaeda.”<sup>110</sup> Indeed the purpose of drone strikes in Pakistan, despite continued signature strikes, is to take out high-value targets whose elimination would deliver a critical blow to the terrorist organization’s function. Yet according to one estimate, “[b]y 2010, one high-value target was killed per 147 total deaths.”<sup>111</sup> “[T]he steady increase in drone attacks conducted in Pakistan between 2004 and 2010 [when the number of drone strikes there peaked] has resulted in a far higher number of deaths overall, but a lower rate of successful killings of high-value militant leaders who command, control and inspire organizations.”<sup>112</sup> In 2011, the *Washington Post* reported that, “despite a major escalation in the number of unmanned Predator strikes being carried out under the Obama administration, data from government and independent sources

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<sup>108</sup> Miller, Greg, and Julie Tate. 2015. 'U.S. Government’s Refusal to Discuss Drone Attacks Comes under Fire'. *Washington Post*. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-silence-on-drone-strikes-comes-under-pressure-after-hostage-deaths/2015/04/24/cb48e9d4-eea7-11e4-aae1-d642717d8afa\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-silence-on-drone-strikes-comes-under-pressure-after-hostage-deaths/2015/04/24/cb48e9d4-eea7-11e4-aae1-d642717d8afa_story.html) (18 October 2015).

<sup>109</sup> Saletan, W. (2013, January 1). Drones Are the Worst Form of War, Except for All the Others. Retrieved from [http://www.slate.com/articles/health\\_and\\_science/human\\_nature/2013/02/drones\\_war\\_and\\_civilian\\_casualties\\_how\\_unmanned\\_aircraft\\_reduce\\_collateral.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/human_nature/2013/02/drones_war_and_civilian_casualties_how_unmanned_aircraft_reduce_collateral.html)

<sup>110</sup> Center for the Study of the Drone. 2015. 'The Disposition Matrix'. <http://dronecenter.bard.edu/the-disposition-matrix/> (6 October 2015).

<sup>111</sup> Hudson, L., Owens, C., & Flannes, M. (2011). Drone Warfare: Blowback from the New American Way of War. *Middle East Policy*, 18(3), 122-132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00502.x>

<sup>112</sup> Hudson, L., Owens, C., & Flannes, M. (2011). Drone Warfare: Blowback from the New American Way of War. *Middle East Policy*, 18(3), 122-132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00502.x>

indicate that the number of high-ranking militants being killed as a result has either slipped or barely increased.”<sup>113</sup>

The Obama administration, on the other hand, has asserted that “[i]n Pakistan, al-Qaida’s leadership ranks have continued to suffer heavy losses. This includes Ilyas Kashmiri, one of al-Qaida’s top operational planners, killed a month after bin Laden. It includes Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, killed when he succeeded Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaida’s deputy leader. It includes Younis al-Mauritani, a planner of attacks against the United States and Europe, until he was captured by Pakistani forces.”<sup>114</sup> Plaw and Fricker explain that “US Counterterrorism Officials credit [the drone campaign]...with eliminating more than half of their top twenty HVTs.”<sup>115</sup> The strategic impacts of drone strikes in Pakistan, however, have been heavily debated. Jeffery Addicott, a former senior legal advisor to the Army Special Forces, “readily admitted that [official] tallies of drone “misses” were almost certainly wrong, because no matter how good the technology, “killing from that high above, there’s always the ‘oops’ factor.” It was likely that for every “bad guy” killed, there were 1.5 civilian deaths.”<sup>116</sup> In 2011, “[t]he disputes over drones became so protracted that the White House launched a review over the summer, in which Mr. Obama intervened.”<sup>117</sup> The review concluded that the CIA’s drone program should continue, but the President set forth new regulations to reduce the chance of civilian casualties and CIA officials were advised to be more discerning about their targets, in large part due to backlash

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<sup>113</sup> Miller, Greg. 2011. 'Increased U.S. Drone Strikes In Pakistan Killing Few High-Value Militants'. *Washingtonpost.com*. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/20/AR2011022002975.html?sid=ST2011022104355> (6 October 2015).

<sup>114</sup> Brennan, John. 2012. 'The Ethics and Efficacy of the President’s Counterterrorism Strategy. Presented at the Wilson Center (Washington, DC).

<sup>115</sup> Plaw, A., & Fricker, M. (2012). Tracking the Predators: Evaluating the US Drone Campaign in Pakistan. *International Studies Perspectives*, 13, 344-365. Retrieved from ProQuest.

<sup>116</sup> Gardner, L. (2013). *Killing machine: The American presidency in the age of drone warfare*. New York: The New Press.

<sup>117</sup> Entous, Adam, Siobhan Gorman, and Julian Barnes. 2011. 'U.S. Tightens Drone Rules'. *Wall Street Journal*. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204621904577013982672973836> (5 October 2015).

from the Pakistani government.<sup>118</sup> And although since 2013 both the incidence of and casualties from drone strikes in Pakistan have decreased, administration officials recently disclosed that Obama signed a waiver that exempted the CIA from following stricter targeting rules in Pakistan.<sup>119</sup> Drone strikes are still being executed in Pakistan, and there has been no indication from the current administration that the strategy will shift or be eliminated. So why does the threat of terrorism remain precarious for the U.S.? The answer lies in the unique security dilemma presented by an asymmetrical, non-state actor.

### 3.3 The Unique Security Dilemma of Asymmetrical Threats

The unipolar structure of the international system is unprecedented, and as a result, neorealist concepts such as the security dilemma must be reevaluated in light of evolving asymmetric threats and innovative responses. The virtues and shortcomings of U.S. unipolarity fall outside the scope of this thesis, however the stability of the current structure is dependent in part on U.S. security and survival. “The emerging literature on U.S. foreign policy...” Miller says, “suggests that what we have witnessed since September 11 is not a fleeting detour from past normalcy, but the outset of a new era.”<sup>120</sup> While the details of such a new era are yet to be seen, neorealist theory can be refined to help scholars and world leaders alike explain and predict the behavior of units within the system. In 2004, the same year the first U.S. drone strikes were planned and executed, Waltz wrote, “The shifts from multi- to bi- to unipolarity during the past century well illustrate how strongly differences in polarity affect the behavior of states and alter

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<sup>118</sup> The Express Tribune. 2013. 'US Scales Back Drone Attacks in Pakistan: Report - The Express Tribune'. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/582200/us-scales-back-drone-attacks-in-pakistan-report/> (6 October 2015).

<sup>119</sup> Entous, Adam. 2015. "Obama Kept Looser Rules for Drones in Pakistan". *Wall Street Journal*. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/obama-kept-looser-rules-for-drones-in-pakistan-1430092626> (20 December 2015).

<sup>120</sup> Miller, Steven. 2005. 'Terrifying Thoughts: Power, Order, and Terror after 9/11'. *Global Governance* 11: 247-271.

international outcomes.”<sup>121</sup> Yet despite the fact that the U.S. has retained its dominance since the fall of the Berlin Wall, it continues to face rising symmetric threats that will ultimately prove capable of checking its power. The nature of symmetric threats is distinct from asymmetrical threats, specifically as it relates to the security dilemma. To understand the unique complexities of the asymmetrical threat of terrorism, it is valuable to explore an example of a contemporary symmetrical threat to the U.S., such as China.

The 2015 National Security Strategy notes that “[i]n particular, India’s potential, China’s rise, and Russia’s aggression all significantly impact the future of major power relations.”<sup>122</sup> Indeed China has been of particular interest to the U.S. in recent years, especially in light of its rising defense budget and increasing military provocations in the South China Sea. Despite welcoming “the rise of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous China,” U.S. officials have acknowledged that a larger, more capable Chinese military poses a significant threat, both to regional powers like Japan as well as to the U.S.<sup>123</sup> <sup>124</sup> “China considers the development of a large, modern navy as defensive. Given the interests and vulnerabilities of Japan, that country considers China’s efforts to be offensive—and potentially aggressive.”<sup>125</sup> The security dilemma is arguably evident here, as American leaders have alluded to skepticism about the extent of China’s military ambitions, highlighting the pervasive lack of trust that exists between states and the divergence between one state’s claims and another’s perceptions.<sup>126</sup> When asked in 2007 what might end unipolarity, Waltz simply replied, “China.”<sup>127</sup> The tensions surrounding China’s

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<sup>121</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. 2004. "Neorealism: Confusions and Criticisms". *Journal of Politics & Society* XV: 2-6.

<sup>122</sup> The White House. 2015. *National Security Strategy*. Washington, DC: The White House.

<sup>123</sup> The White House. 2015. *National Security Strategy*. Washington, DC: The White House.

<sup>124</sup> Phillipp, Joshua. 2014. "China’s Increased Military Budget Comes with a Touch of Hostility". *Epoch Times*.

<sup>125</sup> U.S. Army War College. 2011. *The Strategic Logic of the Contemporary Security Dilemma*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute.

<sup>126</sup> Phillipp, Joshua. 2014. "China’s Increased Military Budget Comes with a Touch of Hostility". *Epoch Times*.

<sup>127</sup> Beyer, Anna. 2015. *Kenneth Waltz's Life and Thought. An Interview*. Online: Lulu.com.

burgeoning ambitions have been especially exacerbated of late by the territorial disputes we see in the South China Sea, where China has been attempting to lay claim to largely uninhabited islands located along a busy shipping route.<sup>128</sup> Interestingly, China has expressed its intent to utilize drones for surveillance in its coastal regions.<sup>129</sup> Not only have Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia taken issue with what, in their eyes, is an affront to their sovereign claims, but the U.S. has deployed naval ships to the region in an effort to enforce “freedom of navigation.”<sup>130</sup> In fact, the *Wall Street Journal* recently pointed out that “[h]igh-level defense talks crumbled over growing territorial disputes in the South China Sea, as the U.S. sought to show strength and assert its role as a counterweight to China.”<sup>131</sup> For the U.S., China can be considered a symmetrical threat due not only to its increasingly powerful military and expansionist tendencies, but also because it is a nation that possesses nuclear weapons and cybersecurity prowess. The Obama administration is answering this symmetrical threat with symmetrical actions of its own, such as patrolling the South China Sea and leveraging participation in ASEAN meetings to increase pressure on China to observe other nations’ sovereign claims in the region. Although the amelioration of provocations is surely a ways off, structural realism posits that all states involved will take measures to maintain their own security and survival, and this could lead to escalations such as arms races or further naval skirmishes. For the U.S., China will remain a potential adversary, though traditional force is unlikely to be used in the foreseeable

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<sup>128</sup> Moss, Trefor, and Gordon Lubold. 2015. "Asia Defense Talks Crumble Over Sea Disputes". *WSJ*. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/asia-u-s-defense-ministers-fail-to-reach-south-china-sea-agreement-1446605460> (15 November 2015).

<sup>129</sup> Perlez, Jane. 2013. "Chinese Plan to Kill Drug Dealer with Drone Highlights Military Advances". *NYTimes.com*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/21/world/asia/chinese-plan-to-use-drone-highlights-military-advances.html> (20 December 2015).

<sup>130</sup> BBC News. 2015. "Q&A: South China Sea Dispute - BBC News". <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349> (15 November 2015).

<sup>131</sup> Moss, Trefor, and Gordon Lubold. 2015. "Asia Defense Talks Crumble Over Sea Disputes". *WSJ*. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/asia-u-s-defense-ministers-fail-to-reach-south-china-sea-agreement-1446605460> (15 November 2015).

future as the Obama administration has surely calculated the risks of overreaction, and the Chinese certainly have as well.

On the other hand, American military dollars are today increasingly being focused on asymmetrical threats, and in particular on counterterrorism in the Middle East. For smaller, less powerful units in the global system, “America’s ability to prevail handily against symmetric threats has forced U.S. adversaries to pursue asymmetric threats.”<sup>132</sup> With asymmetric threats, the security dilemma is still wholly relevant, but its real-world applications must be reimagined to account for non-state actors like terrorism. “In the case of terrorism, information about actors and their motives is not easily available and is hard to assume,” which means that counterterrorism strategies are vitally important to get right.<sup>133</sup> Since 2004, the U.S. has relied on drone strikes, among other strategies, in Pakistan to eliminate terrorists and degrade the ability of radical organizations to function. The U.S. is thus addressing an asymmetrical threat with an asymmetrical response – a new technological advancement used in a unique manner. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates suggested in 2007 that this type of asymmetric warfare would be the new norm in contests of international relations.<sup>134</sup> In light of this shift, the security dilemma must be reevaluated to understand the potential consequences of using drones to target terrorists in Pakistan. The U.S. must consider not only the immediate effects of such drone strikes, but also the long-term, unintended outcomes that may present new sources of insecurity. According to Gray, “[t]ypically, terrorists win when their outrages...induce the state-victim to overreact.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Johnson, Stuart E, Martin C Libicki, and Gregory F Treverton. 2003. *New Challenges, New Tools for Defense Decisionmaking*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand.

<sup>133</sup> <sup>133</sup> Kessler, O., and C. Daase. 2008. "From Insecurity to Uncertainty: Risk and the Paradox of Security Politics". *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 33(2): 211-232.

<sup>134</sup> Mazarr, Michael J. 2008. "The Folly of 'Asymmetric War'". *The Washington Quarterly* 31(3): 33-53.

<sup>135</sup> Gray, Colin. 2002. "Thinking Asymmetrically In Times of Terror". *Parameters* 32(1): 5.

It is impossible to say with certainty whether or not the U.S.'s utilization of targeted drone strikes in Pakistan is an overreaction to the asymmetric threat of terrorism, or if this tactic will lead to an escalation of a dangerous series of hostilities, one side using terrorism, and the other committing targeted killings that may inspire further terrorist violence. Obama himself insisted earlier this year that terrorist organizations "do not pose an existential threat to the US or the world order."<sup>136</sup> There is evidence, however, that the blowback from these strikes is generating multiple sources of insecurity. For Waltz, terrorism isn't a paramount threat to American unipolarity.<sup>137</sup> That said, the unintended consequences of drone strikes in Pakistan may well generate destabilizing threats to the global dominance the U.S. has enjoyed and could possibly contribute to a system-level shift in power. Not only have terrorists carried out or attempted attacks specifically seeking revenge for U.S. drone strikes,<sup>138</sup> but the U.S. State Department remains gravely concerned about the ongoing threat of terrorism, and more specifically the escalation of aggression and brutality from groups such as ISIL.<sup>139</sup> "Drone strikes do kill senior militants at times," Rohde admits, "but using them excessively and keeping them secret sows anti-Americanism that jihadists use as a recruiting tool."<sup>140</sup>

Therein lies a unique new security dilemma that pertains to asymmetrical uses of force. Much of the outrage in Pakistan and globally about U.S. drone strikes focuses on claims of

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<sup>136</sup> Black, Ian. 2015. "Death of Al-Qaida Leader Masks Reality of Drone Strikes: They Don't Bring Stability". *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/16/what-death-of-a-jihadi-leader-mean-for-western-war-militants> (22 November 2015).

<sup>137</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 2008. *Realism and International Politics*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>138</sup> Bennett-Jones, Owen. 2015. 'Learning From Pakistan And The Politics Of Revenge: Should Jordan Just Wait And Let ISIS's Bloodlust Undermine Its Own Cause, Asks Owen Bennett-Jones - The Bureau Of Investigative Journalism'. *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*. <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2015/02/06/politics-of-revenge-should-jordan-wait-isis-bloodlust-owen-bennett-jones/> (24 October 2015).

<sup>139</sup> U.S. State Department. 2015. *Country Reports On Terrorism 2014*. Washington, DC: U.S. State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism.

<sup>140</sup> Rohde, David. 2013. 'Obama's Overdue Step on Drones'. *Reuters*. <http://blogs.reuters.com/david-rohde/2013/05/24/obamas-overdue-step-on-drones/> (24 October 2015).

significant civilian casualties.<sup>141</sup> While neorealists would expect both defensive and offensive measures to be taken by the U.S. to ensure national security and survival, the potential for overreaction and escalation that is created by the security dilemma must be more closely analyzed by American leadership. According to a classified report made public by WikiLeaks, the CIA itself finds fault with the unintended consequences of its drone program. The report, initially published by the CIA in 2009, admits that “[p]otential negative effects of HVT operations include increasing insurgent support, causing a government to neglect other aspects of its counterinsurgency strategy, provoking insurgents to alter strategy or organization in ways that favor the insurgents, strengthening an armed group’s popular support with the population, radicalizing an insurgent group’s remaining leaders, and creating a vacuum into which more radical groups can enter.”<sup>142</sup> Many have argued that Pakistan is less stable now than when the drone campaign began, and that drones specifically have caused an increase in extremists.<sup>143 144</sup> My argument is that these unintended consequences must be factored into the calculation of the security dilemma and considered to be significant risks to the future of U.S. national security and the stability of the international system. Indeed an asymmetrical threat must be addressed with an asymmetrical response, but if the gains in security generated from eliminating some terrorist targets via drone strikes are dwarfed by the longer term potential for increased insecurity, the U.S. must reevaluate its response to the unique security dilemma of counterterrorism.

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<sup>141</sup> Walsh, Declan. 2013. "Civilian Deaths in Drone Strikes Cited In Report". *Nytimes.com*. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/22/world/asia/civilian-deaths-in-drone-strikes-cited-in-report.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/22/world/asia/civilian-deaths-in-drone-strikes-cited-in-report.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1) (22 November 2015).

<sup>142</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency. (2014, December 18). Making High Value Targeting an Effective Counterinsurgency Tool. Retrieved from [http://www.commondreams.org/sites/default/files/wikileaks\\_secret\\_cia\\_review\\_of\\_hvt\\_operations.pdf](http://www.commondreams.org/sites/default/files/wikileaks_secret_cia_review_of_hvt_operations.pdf)

<sup>143</sup> Becker, J., & Shane, S. (2012, May 28). Secret ‘Kill List’ Proves a Test of Obama’s Principles and Will. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-qaeda.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-qaeda.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

<sup>144</sup> Boyle, M. (n.d.). The costs and consequences of drone warfare. *International Affairs*, 1-29.



#### 4. Potentially Destabilizing Impacts

U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan have generated significant controversy in foreign policy discussions bearing on the threat of terrorism. The value of armed drones as a counterterrorism tool is dependent not only on achieving the intended goals of the strikes, but also, and perhaps more importantly, on the nature of their unintended consequences. As Frankel observes, “[t]he attacks have been successful in removing known terrorist and insurgent figures from the battlefield, but what is less clear is whether the strikes have had a positive strategic impact.”<sup>145</sup> From a strategic perspective, the U.S. has set out to use drone strikes as one of its tactics to assuage the ongoing threat of terrorism and prevent future attacks on American lives.<sup>146</sup> Ultimately, as Obama reiterated in 2010, the U.S. “must pursue a strategy of national renewal and global leadership – a strategy that rebuilds the foundation of American strength and influence.”<sup>147</sup> Such a strategy is aligned with the tenets of neorealism – the U.S. is fighting terrorism on a practical level, but the overarching goal is to maintain America’s continued national security, which safeguards its survival. Although the word “drone” only appears once in the most recent National Security Strategy publication, employing targeted strikes in Pakistan is a critical component of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, and by extension, of the American pursuit for state survival.<sup>148</sup> For many neorealists, the nature of terrorism as an asymmetric threat is not considered to be a danger to the current structure of the system. But the unintended consequences, or blowback, of drone strikes in Pakistan may generate threats to the global dominance the U.S. has enjoyed. The existing literature demonstrates that U.S. drone strikes in

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<sup>145</sup> Frankel, Matt. 2010. 'The ABCs of HVT: Key Lessons from High Value Targeting Campaigns against Insurgents and Terrorists'. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34(1): 17-30.

<sup>146</sup> Brennan, John. 2012. 'The Ethics and Efficacy of the President’s Counterterrorism Strategy. Presented at the Wilson Center (Washington, DC).

<sup>147</sup> The White House. 2010. *National Security Strategy*. Washington, DC: The White House.

<sup>148</sup> The White House. 2015. *National Security Strategy*. Washington, DC: The White House.

Pakistan may, or in some cases already do, (1) lead to revenge-driven counter attacks, (2) intensify radical anti-Americanism and create more potential terrorists, (3) destabilize the region, (4) damage the U.S. relationship with nuclear-armed Pakistan, and (5) undermine American “soft power.” Individually and together, these five trends generate potential sources of insecurity that may diminish U.S. power and lead to the destabilization of the current global structure. They also point to the need for a reassessment of the neorealist security dilemma in light of asymmetric threats. “One of the fundamental issues that the post-11 September world must deal with is a new meaning of security loaded with asymmetric threats.”<sup>149</sup> The following sections will present evidence to support the existence of these unintended consequences and describe how each may potentially affect the future of U.S. national security, and by extension its power and influence over the international system.

#### **4.1 The Danger of Revenge**

“By far the most common motive for their actions asserted by current terrorists and former terrorists of every ideological hue from every part of the world is the desire to exact revenge. Sometimes this is revenge for something they or their family suffered, often it is revenge for a wrong inflicted on the community with which they identify.”<sup>150</sup> Imagine your family being brutally and unexpectedly killed by a drone strike – whether or not they were intentionally targeted, an understandable response would be disdain for the perpetrators of the attack and perhaps even the desire to exact revenge. Just as states are expected to respond to threats and attacks on their sovereignty at the system level, so too are individuals at the unit level. In recent years, there have been numerous reports of terrorist attacks as well as foiled plots in which the

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<sup>149</sup> Lee, Sang-Hyun. 2003. "Terrorism and Asymmetric War: Is North Korea a Threat?". *East Asia* 20(2).

<sup>150</sup> Richardson, Louise. 2007. *What Terrorists Want*. Boston: Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.

individual(s) responsible cited revenge against U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan as the impetus for the attack. “The need for revenge, to right a perceived wrong and undo a hurt by whatever means, is a deeply anchored, unrelenting compulsion in the pursuit of all aims,” according to Post.<sup>151</sup> The LBIJ cites various instances in which the Taliban and al Qaeda vowed revenge.<sup>152</sup> So rather than decrease the threat of such organizations, scholars Hudson, Owens, and Flannes found that “[t]he few successful drone attacks on high-profile targets seem to have mobilized existing networks of followers to conduct symbolic revenge attacks of comparable magnitude.”<sup>153</sup> In the case of drone strikes, potential terrorists have a concrete target to which they can assign their anger and justify their continued radicalism, which diminishes the tactic’s ability to ensure U.S. security and survival. Continued terrorist attacks have the potential to degrade U.S. security and threaten the stability of the international system.

Some terrorist attacks have been intended as revenge for specific drone strikes in Pakistan, such as the December 30, 2009 suicide attack on Camp Chapman in Khost, Afghanistan, in which Humam Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi, a Jordanian doctor killed nine people, seven of which were American CIA operatives.<sup>154</sup> Both al Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban took responsibility for facilitating the attack, releasing a video recording of al-Balawi in which he “called for foreign jihadists to attack US targets to avenge the death of former Pakistan Taliban

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<sup>151</sup> Post, Jerrold M., Cody McGinnis, and Kristen Moody. 2014. 'The Changing Face of Terrorism in the 21st Century: The Communications Revolution and the Virtual Community of Hatred'. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 32(3): 306-334.

<sup>152</sup> Bennett-Jones, Owen. 2015. 'Learning From Pakistan And The Politics Of Revenge: Should Jordan Just Wait And Let ISIS's Bloodlust Undermine Its Own Cause, Asks Owen Bennett-Jones - The Bureau Of Investigative Journalism'. *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*. <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2015/02/06/politics-of-revenge-should-jordan-wait-isis-bloodlust-owen-bennett-jones/> (24 October 2015).

<sup>153</sup> Hudson, L., Owens, C., & Flannes, M. (2011). Drone Warfare: Blowback from the New American Way of War. *Middle East Policy*, 18(3), 122-132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00502.x>

<sup>154</sup> MSNBC.com. 2010. 'Source: CIA Bomber's Intel Led to Successes'. [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/34705029/ns/world\\_news-south\\_and\\_central\\_asia/t/source-cia-bombers-intel-led-to-successes/#.ViudBH6rTIV](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/34705029/ns/world_news-south_and_central_asia/t/source-cia-bombers-intel-led-to-successes/#.ViudBH6rTIV) (24 October 2015).

leader Baitullah Mehsud in an American drone strike.”<sup>155</sup> Following Mehsud’s killing in August 2009, a Taliban spokesman not only vowed revenge, but stated, “The holding of peace talks is not even an issue to discuss – [the Pakistani] government has no authority, it is not a sovereign government, it is a slave, a slave of America. Holding peace talks is a waste of time.”<sup>156</sup> Indeed al-Balawi’s attack proved the Taliban’s rhetoric to be true. Mehsud’s killing via drone was criticized by many, including the Pakistani government, which “denounced the killing as a US bid to derail planned peace talks, summoning the US ambassador for an explanation of the fatal attack,” and vowed a full review of its cooperation with the U.S.<sup>157</sup> <sup>158</sup> Pakistan Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisa characterized the strike as “the murder of all efforts at peace.”<sup>159</sup> In an interview following the Khost attack, al-Balawi’s father expressed understanding of his son’s radical ideology, suggesting that the attack was part of an attempt by terrorist organizations to combat U.S. oppression.<sup>160</sup> The perception of oppression is heightened with drones because they can be seen and heard as they continuously hover above communities in Pakistan. Medea Benjamin explains that the threat of drone strikes causes many Pakistanis to live in constant fear, disrupting their daily lives, which fuels the desire for revenge.<sup>161</sup> Hassan Abbas echoed this sentiment, saying, “The inherently secret nature of the weapon creates a persistent feeling of fear in the

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<sup>155</sup> Sherwell, Philip. 2010. 'Suicide Bomb Attack on CIA Was 'Revenge for Drone Killing''. *Telegraph.co.uk*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6957619/Suicide-bomb-attack-on-CIA-was-revenge-for-drone-killing.html> (24 October 2015).

<sup>156</sup> RT English. 2013. "Pakistani Taliban Pledges Revenge after Leader’s Death in Drone Strike". <https://www.rt.com/news/taliban-pakistan-revenge-attacks-420/> (27 November 2015).

<sup>157</sup> Edwards, Michael. 2013. 'Pakistan Angered After Drone Strike Kills Taliban Chief Hakimullah Mehsud'. *ABC News*. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-11-03/pakistan-reacts-angrily-to-us-drone-strike-that-killed-taliban-5066238> (24 October 2015).

<sup>158</sup> Sahi, Aoun, and Mark Magnier. 2013. 'Revenge A Concern After Drone Killing Of Pakistani Taliban Leader'. *latimes*. <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/nov/02/world/la-fg-wn-revenge-drone-pakistani-taliban-20131102> (24 October 2015).

<sup>159</sup> Mehsud, Saud, and Hafiz Wazir. 2013. "Pakistan Taliban Secretly Bury Leader, Vow Bombs In Revenge| Reuters". *Mobile.reuters.com*. <http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSBRE9A103Q20131102> (27 November 2015).

<sup>160</sup> Aljazeera.com. 2010. 'CIA Attack 'Revenge For Mehsud''. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2010/01/2010197189398339.html> (24 October 2015).

<sup>161</sup> Benjamin, M. (2013). *Drone warfare: Killing by remote control* (Updated ed.). London: Verso.

areas where drones hover in the sky, and the hopelessness of communities that are on the receiving end of strikes causes severe backlash -- both in terms of anti-U.S. opinion and violence.”<sup>162</sup>

More general feelings of injustice therefore have also led to revenge attacks. In 2009, Najibullah Zazi, an Afghani who grew up in New York City, attempted, but ultimately failed, to detonate a suicide bomb on the subway.<sup>163</sup> Zazi had travelled with co-conspirators the year prior to Pakistan to fight alongside the Taliban, but after receiving extensive training, the group returned to the U.S. to carry out their plot on behalf of al Qaeda. In the weeks leading up to the attempt, emails Zazi sent regarding bomb materials were intercepted by intelligence officials, whose surveillance efforts caused Zazi to abort the plot. Zazi and two other men were eventually arrested and charged with providing material support to a terrorist organization and conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction and commit murder in a foreign country.<sup>164</sup> During court proceedings, Zazi indicated that he and his co-conspirators “conceived their effort as revenge for the drone attacks in northwestern Pakistan.”<sup>165</sup> Such sentiments appear to be an extension of the rationale many claim motivates terrorists – that they are fighting back against perceived injustices perpetrated by the West against some Middle Eastern states and against Islam.<sup>166</sup> Such attitudes were shared by Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistani-born naturalized U.S. citizen, who in May

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<sup>162</sup> Abbas, Hassan. 2013. 'How Drones Create More Terrorists'. *The Atlantic*.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/how-drones-create-more-terrorists/278743/> (24 October 2015).

<sup>163</sup> SULZBERGER, A.G., and WILLIAM RASHBAUM. 2010. 'Najibullah Zazi Pleads Guilty In Plot To Bomb Subway'. *Nytimes.com*.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/23/nyregion/23terror.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Aw%2C%5B%22RI%3A6%22%2C%22RI%3A18%22%5D> (24 October 2015).

<sup>164</sup> SULZBERGER, A.G., and WILLIAM RASHBAUM. 2010. 'Najibullah Zazi Pleads Guilty In Plot To Bomb Subway'. *Nytimes.com*.

<sup>165</sup> Madar, Chase. 2014. 'Drone Attacks Undermine National Security'. *America.aljazeera.com*.

<http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/7/drone-blowback.html> (24 October 2015).

<sup>166</sup> Post, Jerrold et al. 2009. 'The Psychology of Suicide Terrorism'. *Psychiatry* 72(1).

2010 planned and executed a plot to set off a car bomb in the middle of Times Square in New York City. He had trained with the Taliban in Pakistan the year prior. Fortunately, a glitch prevented the explosive device from detonating and Shahzad was arrested as he was attempting to flee the country.<sup>167</sup> At his arraignment, Shahzad cited the American “occupation of Muslim lands” and U.S. drone strikes that have killed civilians, specifically women and children, as his primary motivations for the unsuccessful attack.<sup>168</sup> Indeed the collateral damage of drone strikes contributes to the feelings of terror that many Pakistani’s share and provides a rationale for avenging deaths of those perceived as innocent. “Consider me only a first droplet of the flood that will follow me,” Shazad warned, alluding to the fact that others may also plot attacks against the U.S. to avenge drone strikes.<sup>169</sup>

Most recently in December 2014, the Taliban carried out one of the deadliest terrorist attacks of the last decade in Peshawar, Pakistan, killing 141 people, mostly students, at a high school run by the Pakistani army. The seven militants used automatic weapons and suicide bombs to execute their victims and claimed that the attack was intended “as revenge for months of airstrikes on their tribal-area strongholds by Pakistan warplanes and CIA drones.”<sup>170</sup> Although the targets in this case were Pakistani, the incident highlights the threat of attacks based on revenge for both Pakistan and the U.S. Because the Pakistani government has largely allowed the U.S. to conduct drone strikes within its borders and even leverage U.S. drones for its own operations, the possibility of revenge attacks against Pakistani targets is significant. Kennedy

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<sup>167</sup> Adams, Lorraine. 2010. 'Inside The Mind of the Times Square Bomber'. *The Guardian*.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/19/times-square-bomber> (24 October 2015).

<sup>168</sup> Madar, Chase. 2014. 'Drone Attacks Undermine National Security'. *America.aljazeera.com*.  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/7/drone-blowback.html> (24 October 2015).

<sup>169</sup> WILSON, MICHAEL. 2010. 'Shahzad Gets Life for Times Square Bombing Attempt'. *Nytimes.com*.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/06/nyregion/06shahzad.html> (24 October 2015).

<sup>170</sup> Hussein, Tom. 2014. 'In Revenge, Pakistani Taliban Strike School, Killing At Least 141'. *mcclatchydc*.  
<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/middle-east/article24777508.html> (24 October 2015).

notes that “[f]eelings of hostility are often visited on the most immediate structures of authority—local government officials, government buildings, police, and the military. It can thus be argued that, at the strategic level, drone strikes are fueling anti-American resentment among enemies and allies alike.”<sup>171</sup> It is unclear how many more attacks may be attempted to take revenge for drone strikes in Pakistan, but following the 2013 drone killing of Hakimullah Mehsud, a deputy commander under former Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud who was also killed by a drone strike, the Taliban warned that “[e]very drop of Hakimullah’s blood will turn into a suicide bomber.”<sup>172</sup> Though outside the immediate scope of this thesis, a report from Columbia Law School also notes terrorist attacks in Somalia and Yemen that were conducted to exact revenge for U.S. drone strikes in those states.<sup>173</sup> “Too often,” Frankel argues, “HVT campaigns are plagued by poor intelligence, cause unnecessary collateral damage, spur retaliatory attacks, and in many cases, yield little to no positive effects on the insurgent or terrorist group being targeted.”<sup>174</sup> The immediate implication of further revenge attacks is U.S. insecurity, which is a primary example of the unique security dilemma posted by the asymmetrical threat of terrorism. While neorealism posits that the security dilemma is an inherent element of IR, the shifting nature of threats in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly those which stem from non-state actors, require a similar shift in the conceptualization of the dilemma. It appears that asymmetrical threats and responses present an increased potential for overreaction and violent escalation, a fact that must be seriously considered as the U.S. plans and executes

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<sup>171</sup> Kennedy, G. (2013). Drones: Legitimacy and Anti-Americanism. Retrieved from [http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/Parameters/Issues/WinterSpring\\_2013/3\\_Article\\_Kennedy.pdf](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/Parameters/Issues/WinterSpring_2013/3_Article_Kennedy.pdf)

<sup>172</sup> Abbas, Hassan. 2013. 'How Drones Create More Terrorists'. *The Atlantic*. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/how-drones-create-more-terrorists/278743/> (24 October 2015).

<sup>173</sup> Columbia Law School Human Rights Clinic. 2012. *The Civilian Impact of Drones: Unexamined Costs, Unanswered Questions*. New York: Columbia Law School Human Rights Clinic.

<sup>174</sup> Frankel, Matt. 2010. 'The ABCs of HVT: Key Lessons from High Value Targeting Campaigns against Insurgents and Terrorists'. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34(1): 17-30.

counterterrorism measures. In addition, attacks in Pakistan may sow resentment on behalf of the Pakistani government, whose support of the American drone program is key to its success. The unintended consequence of revenge attacks is a product of a broader trend that has been exacerbated by drone strikes – anti-Americanism and radicalization – which breed threats to U.S. security and to international stability.

#### 4.2 The Growing Terrorist Threat

The sources of radical ideologies and the causes of terrorism are varied and complex. Experts like Crenshaw<sup>175</sup> and Post,<sup>176</sup> among others, have proposed a various explanations for what may motivate terrorists, but the reality is that it is impossible to know for sure. From a neorealist perspective, Jervis links terrorism with unipolarity, writing, “The enormous power in the hands of the unipole encourages terrorism in part by taking so many weapons out of others' hands, in part by making it the target of discontent almost anywhere, and in part by its intrusive presence throughout the world.”<sup>177</sup> There is evidence that U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan may be contributing to the growing threat of terrorism worldwide, despite the fact that their intended goal is precisely the opposite. According to a report from National Public Radio (NPR), “counterterrorism experts...say the drone attacks increase the number of Pakistanis who support extremism, and that for every enemy killed, more are created.”<sup>178</sup> Although tracking trends in terrorism and the prevalence of radical ideologies is not an uncomplicated task, the U.S. State Department, the University of Maryland-run Global Terrorism Database (GTD), and the Institute

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<sup>175</sup> Crenshaw, Martha. 2000. "The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the Twenty-First Century". *Political Psychology* 21(2).

<sup>176</sup> Post, Jarrold. 2005. "Understanding Terrorism: Psychosocial Roots, Consequences, and Interventions". *Political Psychology* 26(1).

<sup>177</sup> Jervis, Robert. 2009. 'Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective'. *World Politics* 61(1): 188-213.

<sup>178</sup> Temple-Raston, D. (2010, June 3). U.S. Drone Strategy in Pakistan under Scrutiny. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127377657>



for Economics and Peace (IEP), among others, follow and report trends in global terrorism from year to year. The IEP released its 2014 Global Terrorism Index report earlier this year, which concluded from data provided by the GTD that “[t]errorism has increased dramatically with even conservative estimates suggesting a fivefold surge since the year 2000.”<sup>179</sup> The report specifically highlighted an increase in terrorism since 2011 in the border regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and ranked Pakistan third on its global terrorism index, only behind Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>180</sup> While the IEP mentions a possible connection between the Iraq War and the global rise in terrorism, others suggest that U.S. counterterrorism strategies as a whole are to blame.<sup>181</sup> “You can’t bomb a country into giving up certain ideas,” Rahiel Tesfamariam lamented in 2012, rather “[i]nternal struggles have to take place to marginalize certain ideas. You harden ideas this way.”<sup>182</sup> The potential that certain U.S. counterterrorism tactics such as drone strikes are generating increases in terrorism is not only ironic, but presents a significant source of insecurity for America. The CIA itself found fault with its drone program, highlighting in a classified 2009 report the risk of increased insurgency resulting from drone strikes in Pakistan.<sup>183</sup> Indeed the U.S. is addressing the asymmetric threat of terrorism through a variety of means, but anecdotal evidence suggests that drone strikes in Pakistan specifically create more potential terrorists than they eliminate, which may have broader implications for U.S. security and the

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<sup>179</sup> The Institute for Economics and Peace. 2015. *Global Terrorism Index 2014*. Sydney: The Institute for Economics and Peace.

<sup>180</sup> The Institute for Economics and Peace. 2015. *Global Terrorism Index 2014*. Sydney: The Institute for Economics and Peace.

<sup>181</sup> MacAskill, Ewen. 2014. "Fivefold Increase In Terrorism Fatalities Since 9/11, Says Report". *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/nov/18/fivefold-increase-terrorism-fatalities-global-index> (28 November 2015).

<sup>182</sup> Tesfamariam, Rahiel. 2012. "The Threat of Drones Ushering In ‘Invisible Wars’". *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/wp/2012/12/10/the-threat-of-drones-ushering-in-invisible-wars/> (2 December 2015).

<sup>183</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency. (2014, December 18). Making High Value Targeting an Effective Counterinsurgency Tool. Retrieved from [http://www.commondreams.org/sites/default/files/wikileaks\\_secret\\_cia\\_review\\_of\\_hvt\\_operations.pdf](http://www.commondreams.org/sites/default/files/wikileaks_secret_cia_review_of_hvt_operations.pdf)

stability of the unipolar system. *The Washington Post* reported that Bruce Riedel, a former CIA analyst and counterterrorism advisor to Obama, explained that “[t]he problem with the drone is it’s like your lawn mower, you’ve got to mow the lawn all the time. The minute you stop mowing, the grass is going to grow back.”<sup>184</sup>

A valuable way to examine this paradox is to consider the phenomenon of the “accidental guerilla.” A concept formalized by former Department of State counterterrorism strategist David Kilcullen, “accidental guerilla” is a term that describes individuals who wouldn’t necessarily take up arms were it not for a foreign intrusion into their territory and way of life.<sup>185</sup> While living and conducting research in the FATA of Pakistan, Kilcullen heard numerous accounts of accidental guerillas and the ways in which terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda and the Taliban exploit them. Locals told him that “AQ moves into remote areas, creates alliances with local traditional communities, exports violence that prompts a Western intervention,” such as drone strikes, “and then exploits the backlash against that intervention in order to generate support for its *takfiri* agenda. Al Qaeda’s ideology tends to lack intrinsic appeal for traditional societies, and so it draws the majority of its strength from this backlash rather than from genuine popular support.”<sup>186</sup> Such communities, therefore, are directly influenced by the ramifications of U.S. drone strikes in such a way that encourages the desire for revenge and incentivizes association with terrorist organizations. Pew found that, although outright support for al Qaeda and the Taliban remained relatively low in Pakistan, there has been a decrease in negative opinions about extremist organizations over the last five years, and in 2014, a third of Pakistanis had no opinion

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<sup>184</sup> Miller, G. (2012, October 23). Plan for hunting terrorists signals U.S. intends to keep adding names to kill lists. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/plan-for-hunting-terrorists-signals-us-intends-to-keep-adding-names-to-kill-lists/2012/10/23/4789b2ae-18b3-11e2-a55c-39408fbc6a4b\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/plan-for-hunting-terrorists-signals-us-intends-to-keep-adding-names-to-kill-lists/2012/10/23/4789b2ae-18b3-11e2-a55c-39408fbc6a4b_story.html)

<sup>185</sup> Kilcullen, David. 2009. *The Accidental Guerrilla*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>186</sup> Kilcullen, David. 2009. *The Accidental Guerrilla*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

about them, making those individuals susceptible to radical influences.<sup>187</sup> The backlash from drone strikes in Pakistan, particularly those that have killed civilians, generates anti-American sentiment which terrorist organizations can use as a recruiting tool, particularly for those individuals who had previously remained neutral.<sup>188</sup> Even Robert Grenier, who led the CIA's Counterterrorism Center from 2004, when drone strikes were first carried out by the U.S., to 2006, has claimed that America is creating more enemies than it's eradicating, particularly in Pakistan.<sup>189</sup> Kilcullen explains that “[r]eligious extremism and support for the old Taliban regime are rarer motivations...[rather] desire for revenge (*badal*) and anger arising from the loss of relatives in the fighting or from killing of bystanders and destruction of property through “collateral damage” are more common.”<sup>190</sup> Senior Pakistani Army officials also cautioned the U.S. that drone strikes were augmenting the ranks of militants in the state, and the Pakistani government in 2012 went so far as to demand that the U.S. cease drone strikes in its territory, though they have since continued.<sup>191</sup> <sup>192</sup> According to scholars Hudson, Owens, and Flannes, “[t]he rapidly growing population of survivors and witnesses of [drone strikes] have emotional and social needs and incentives to join the ranks of groups that access and attack U.S. targets in Afghanistan across the porous border.”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. 2014. "A Less Gloomy Mood in Pakistan". <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/08/27/a-less-gloomy-mood-in-pakistan/> (29 November 2015).

<sup>188</sup> Rohde, David. 2013. 'Obama's Overdue Step on Drones'. *Reuters*. <http://blogs.reuters.com/david-rohde/2013/05/24/obamas-overdue-step-on-drones/> (24 October 2015).

<sup>189</sup> Harris, Paul. 2012. 'Drone Attacks Create Terrorist Safe Havens, Warns Former CIA Official'. *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/05/al-qaida-drone-attacks-too-broad> (21 October 2015).

<sup>190</sup> Kilcullen, David. 2009. *The Accidental Guerrilla*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>191</sup> The Express Tribune. 2013. 'US Scales Back Drone Attacks in Pakistan: Report - The Express Tribune'. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/582200/us-scales-back-drone-attacks-in-pakistan-report/> (6 October 2015).

<sup>192</sup> Masood, S., & Walsh, D. (2012, April 12). Pakistan Gives U.S. a List of Demands, Including an End to C.I.A. Drone Strikes. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/13/world/asia/pakistan-demands-an-end-to-cia-drone-strikes.html>

<sup>193</sup> Hudson, L., Owens, C., & Flannes, M. (2011). Drone Warfare: Blowback from the New American Way of War. *Middle East Policy*, 18(3), 122-132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00502.x>

The accidental guerilla phenomenon that is occurring in Pakistan is a prime example of the neorealist security dilemma in practice. According to Jervis, the use of drone strikes as a counterterrorism tool is understandable given the structure of the international system. He explains that “actors are prone to accept great risks when they believe they will suffer losses unless they act boldly. The adoption of a preventive war doctrine may be a mistake, especially if taken too far, but it is not foreign to normal state behavior and it appeals to states that have a valued position to maintain.”<sup>194</sup> And some foreign policy analysts and pundits argue that drones have been successful in eliminating key adversaries and by extension disrupting the leadership and functionality of certain terrorist organizations. However, the U.S. must consider the potential increase in extremism that results from its drone campaign in Pakistan as it weighs the risks of its foreign policy options and reassess its approach to the security dilemma in light of the unique nature of unipolarity and the asymmetrical threat of terrorism. Hassan Abbas and Paul Harris both note that the manner in which the U.S. is authorizing drone strikes is particularly significant in relation to the increase in extremism.<sup>195</sup> <sup>196</sup> The U.S. tactic of “signature” strikes in which the targets are not only *not* high-value, but are most often not identified at all, as well as reports of drone strikes targeting funerals and other gatherings, are particularly inflammatory to Pakistani communities.<sup>197</sup> Similarly, the imprecision of U.S. intelligence that guides drone strikes can lead to collateral damage that generates intense anti-Americanism. “In Pakistan,” *Reprive* noted, “24 men were reported as killed or targeted multiple times. Missed strikes on these men killed 874

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<sup>194</sup> Jervis, Robert. 2009. 'Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective'. *World Politics* 61(1): 188-213.

<sup>195</sup> Abbas, Hassan. 2013. 'How Drones Create More Terrorists'. *The Atlantic*.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/how-drones-create-more-terrorists/278743/> (24 October 2015).

<sup>196</sup> Harris, Paul. 2012. 'Drone Attacks Create Terrorist Safe Havens, Warns Former CIA Official'. *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/05/al-qaida-drone-attacks-too-broad> (21 October 2015).

<sup>197</sup> Harris, Paul. 2012. "Drone Attacks Create Terrorist Safe Havens, Warns Former CIA Official". *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/05/al-qaida-drone-attacks-too-broad> (19 December 2015).

people, including 142 children.”<sup>198</sup> Although it is impossible, aside from some of the instances of revenge attacks noted in the previous section, to draw direct causality between such drone strikes and increases in global terrorism, Williams acknowledges that “anecdotal evidence suggests errant strikes that kill civilians, at the worst, drive surviving tribesman into the arms of the militants or, at best, undermine progovernment tribal leaders.”<sup>199</sup> The paradox that a counterterrorism tactic such as drone strikes is in fact increasing the threat of terrorism is related to the neorealist security dilemma. However, neorealism’s relative exclusion of non-state actors and dismissal of asymmetrical threats must be reconsidered in light of the trends discussed here. Waltz and others revised their theoretical concepts in light of the current global structure, but the drastic shift from symmetrical threats to asymmetrical threats like terrorism that the U.S. has encountered recently necessitates a reimagining of the security dilemma and how it affects international relations. We know that the security seeking of one state triggers automatic insecurity in other states, but in the case of terrorism, the security dilemma becomes even more unpredictable. The impact of such trends may create a snowball effect that leads to destabilization of Pakistan and of the entire region, and ultimately may prove detrimental to U.S. national security and survival.

### **4.3 Damaging U.S.-Pakistan Relations (and Nuclear Consequences)**

Prior to 9/11, Pakistan was a supporter of the Taliban in Afghanistan – so relations between the U.S. and Pakistan have historically been strained, to say the least.<sup>200</sup> Much of the support Pakistan has provided to the War on Terror was in fact predicated by the promise of debt

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<sup>198</sup> Reprieve US. 2014. 'US Drone Strikes Kill 28 Unknown People For Every Intended Target, New Reprieve Report Reveals'. <http://www.reprieve.org/us-drone-strikes-kill-28-unknown-people-for-every-intended-target-new-reprieve-report-reveals.html> (6 October 2015).

<sup>199</sup> Williams, B. (2013). *Predators: The CIA's drone war on al Qaeda*. Dulles: Potomac Books.

<sup>200</sup> Smith, Paul J. 2011. "The China–Pakistan–United States Strategic Triangle: From Cold War to the “War on Terrorism”". *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 38(4): 197-220.

relief and continued aid from the U.S.<sup>201</sup> U.S.-Pakistan relations have ebbed and flowed over the last decade, but as neorealism suggests, even the closest of allies struggle with some level of mistrust regarding the intentions of the other state. A 2010 *New York Times* article aptly summarized the relationship as “sometimes cooperative, often confrontational, [and] always wary” – a relationship plagued by the security dilemma.<sup>202</sup> The U.S. has accused Pakistan of not doing enough to combat terrorism, and even suggested that the Pakistani army has tipped off the Taliban prior to planned U.S. strikes.<sup>203</sup> Pakistan has similarly criticized the U.S. for carrying out the special operations mission to kill Osama bin Laden in 2011 without first informing the Pakistani government.<sup>204</sup> The security dilemma is evident in U.S.-Pakistan relations and drone strikes have created a unique paradox. The Pakistani government, though it has been complicit in U.S. drone strikes, has expressed significant concerns about the violation of sovereignty that drone strikes present and about the unintended consequences of American counterterrorism strategy.<sup>205</sup> In 2012, the Pakistani ambassador to the UN, Zamir Akram, criticized the number of civilian casualties caused by drone strikes and stated that Pakistan “finds the use of drones to be totally counterproductive in terms of succeeding in the war against terror. It leads to greater levels of terror rather than reducing them.”<sup>206</sup> Indeed, the incidence of terrorist attacks in

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<sup>201</sup> CNN.com. 2005. "Rice: U.S. Will Support Pakistan - Oct 12, 2005".

<http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/asiapcf/10/12/rice.asia.visit/index.html> (29 November 2015).

<sup>202</sup> Perlez, Jane, David E. Sanger, and Eric Schmitt. 2010. "Wikileaks Archive - U.S. and Pakistan, Ever Wary". *NYTimes.com*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/01/world/asia/01/wikileaks-pakistan.html?pagewanted=all> (19 December 2015).

<sup>203</sup> Dawn.com. 2012. "Timeline: History of US-Pakistan Relations". <http://www.dawn.com/news/731670/timeline-history-of-us-pakistan-relations> (29 November 2015).

<sup>204</sup> Dilanian, Ken. 2014. "US, Pakistan Remain Wary But Relations Improve". *The Washington Times*. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/dec/5/us-relationship-with-pakistan-wary-but-improving/?page=all> (29 November 2015).

<sup>205</sup> Javaid, Umbreen, and Zulfiqar Ali. 2013. "War on Terror Partnership: Problems and Prospects for Pakistan". *Journal of Political Studies* 20(1).

<sup>206</sup> Bowcott, Owen. 2012. 'Drone Strikes Threaten 50 Years Of International Law, Says UN Rapporteur'. *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/21/drone-strikes-international-law-un> (21 October 2015).

Pakistan alone has drastically increased since the U.S. began its drone campaign in 2004.<sup>207</sup> U.S. counterterrorism operations, including drone strikes, have continued in Pakistan, however, and relations between the two states have managed thus far to recover from various disagreements.

Citizens' attitudes toward the U.S., on the other hand, have remained volatile in Pakistan. While public opinion of the U.S. among Pakistanis reached an all-time low in 2012 after beginning to decline in 2004 when the drone campaign began, the most recent estimates by Pew indicate that almost two thirds hold unfavorable views of America.<sup>208</sup> While there are certain populations in Pakistan that have certainly held negative opinions of the U.S. long before the War on Terror, Madiha Afzal suggests that "drone strikes are infuriating the more moderate and liberal segments of Pakistani society, those who have traditionally been more sympathetic toward the United States."<sup>209</sup> When it comes to drone strikes, while Pakistan may allow the U.S. to target militants within its borders, the government must still contend with backlash from its people. In 2014, only 3% of Pakistanis supported U.S. drone strikes and 67% felt they killed too many innocent people.<sup>210</sup> There is a growing movement against the current Prime Minister of Pakistan, headed by opposition leader Imran Khan of the Movement for Justice, who is vocally against U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan. "He has pledged to overturn military strategy in the region, ending the controversial US drone strikes but also operations by Pakistan's army against

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<sup>207</sup> Cordesman, Anthony H. 2014. *The Metrics of Terrorism and Instability in Pakistan*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies. [http://csis.org/files/publication/141218\\_Pakistan\\_Terror\\_Metrics.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/141218_Pakistan_Terror_Metrics.pdf) (19 December 2015).

<sup>208</sup> Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. 2014. "A Less Gloomy Mood in Pakistan". <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/08/27/a-less-gloomy-mood-in-pakistan/> (29 November 2015).

<sup>209</sup> Afzal, Madiha. 2013. "Drone Strikes and Anti-Americanism in Pakistan". *The Brookings Institution*. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/02/07-drones-anti-americanism-pakistan-afzal> (29 November 2015).

<sup>210</sup> Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. 2014. "A Less Gloomy Mood in Pakistan". <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/08/27/a-less-gloomy-mood-in-pakistan/> (29 November 2015).

the Taliban bases in the tribal border areas.”<sup>211</sup> Over half of Pakistanis view Khan favorably, and despite the potential merits of Khan’s strategy, which is aimed at a peaceful end to the war on terrorism, the possibility that anti-drone leadership takes power in Pakistan could prove harmful to U.S.-Pakistan relations.<sup>212</sup> According to the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, the U.S. “will defeat al-Qa‘ida only through a sustained partnership with Pakistan.”<sup>213</sup> And while such a relationship is possible, it seems that drone strikes may be stunting the cultivation of a more positive partnership. In fact, “many within State and the Pentagon believe that the current pace of drone strikes risks destabilizing a nuclear-armed ally and makes the task of U.S. diplomats more difficult.”<sup>214</sup>

The potential implications of a dissolving alliance between the U.S. and Pakistan may be severe, especially given the fact that Pakistan is a nuclear state. Because Pakistan is already internally unstable, control over its nuclear capabilities is tenuous.<sup>215</sup> A recent report from the *New York Times* covered ongoing discussions between the U.S. and Pakistan regarding Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program, and emphasized the fact that “U.S. officials have long had concerns about Pakistan’s nuclear program, which is considered to be among the world’s most dangerous because of historical political instability and an acute rivalry with neighboring India.”<sup>216</sup> Indeed

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<sup>211</sup> Rose, David. 2012. "Can A Millionaire Ex-Cricket Star Go From Playboy To Prime Minister? Yes He Khan!". *Mail Online*. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2230965/Imran-Khan-Can-millionaire-ex-cricket-star-playboy-prime-minister-Yes-Khan.html> (29 November 2015).

<sup>212</sup> Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. 2014. "A Less Gloomy Mood in Pakistan". <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/08/27/a-less-gloomy-mood-in-pakistan/> (29 November 2015).

<sup>213</sup> The White House. (2011). *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*. Washington, DC: The White House.

<sup>214</sup> Hudson, L., Owens, C., & Flannes, M. (2011). Drone Warfare: Blowback from the New American Way of War. *Middle East Policy*, 18(3), 122-132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00502.x>

<sup>215</sup> Farooq, Sadaf. 2012. "Pakistan's Internal Security Dynamics and the Role of Military Regimes". *International Journal on World Peace* 29(3).

<sup>216</sup> Schwartz, Felicia. 2015. "U.S., Pakistan Discuss Nuclear Weapons Program; Talks Come Ahead Of Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Visit to Washington Next Week". *The Wall Street Journal (Online)*. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/docview/1722341335/60D22DE18B5945EFPQ/12?accountid=14826> (29 November 2015).



the U.S. has criticized Pakistan's nuclear bravado toward India and sought to limit the proliferation of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.<sup>217</sup> As neorealism suggests, increased security of one nation, such as Pakistan, no matter the intention, is by default a threat to the security of others, like the U.S. Any strain on U.S.-Pakistan relations as a result of continued drone strikes therefore has the potential to become a threat to U.S. security. Additionally, the increase in revenge attacks and extremist ideologies in Pakistan that appear to be stemming at least in part from U.S. drone strikes put Pakistan at risk of becoming increasingly unstable, which is never a desirable state for a nuclear power. "Nuclear experts repeatedly warn of the danger of some of these weapons falling into the hands of terrorists,"<sup>218</sup> and while some argue that such an incident is *currently* unlikely,<sup>219</sup> the U.S. must consider how drone strikes may contribute to a risk with nuclear consequences. Van De Velde notes that various terrorist organizations have expressed the desire to obtain nuclear weapons, and "[i]n 1998, Osama bin Laden declared that "acquiring WMD for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty."<sup>220 221</sup> In the event that Pakistan ceased to be an American ally or a terrorist organization seized control of nuclear weapons, the U.S. would be faced with critical threats to its security that may eventually jeopardize its position as the unipole. Additionally, increased instability in Pakistan threatens the stability of the entire region,

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<sup>217</sup> Schwartz, Felicia. 2015. "U.S., Pakistan Discuss Nuclear Weapons Program; Talks Come Ahead Of Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Visit to Washington Next Week". *The Wall Street Journal (Online)*. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/docview/1722341335/60D22DE18B5945EFPQ/12?accountid=14826> (29 November 2015).

<sup>218</sup> Rashmi, Sehgal. 2015. "Pakistan's Nasr Missile Is The Most Dangerous Development In South Asia". *India Abroad*. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/docview/1703535325/60D22DE18B5945EFPQ/30?accountid=14826> (29 November 2015).

<sup>219</sup> Oxford Analytica. 2015. *PAKISTAN: Army Is Unlikely To Suffer Islamist Coup*. Oxford: Oxford Analytica. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/docview/1721361654/abstract/60D22DE18B5945EFPQ/14?accountid=14826> (29 November 2015).

<sup>220</sup> Van De Velde, James R. 2010. "The Impossible Challenge of Deterring "Nuclear Terrorism" By Al Qaeda". *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33(8): 682-699.

<sup>221</sup> Mowatt-Larssen, Rolf. 2010. "Al Qaeda Weapons of Mass Destruction Threat: Hype or Reality?". *Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*.

including already unstable states like Afghanistan and Iraq, which might impact the stability of the international structure as a whole.

#### 4.4 Regional Destabilization

According to the World Bank, Pakistan's ratings for "Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism" have remained extremely low over the last two decades, and since 2007 have hovered no more than a few decimal points above zero.<sup>222</sup> Yet further deterioration of stability in Pakistan due to the unintended consequences of U.S. drone strikes has the potential to impact the security of neighboring states in Southwest Asia and the Middle East as a whole. Jervis notes that "today some states believe that the way the U.S. is pursuing its "war on terror" increases the chance they will be the victim of terrorist attacks and decreases stability in the Middle East."<sup>223</sup> The security dilemma is thus felt by many, not just by the U.S. and Pakistan. While the hypothetical scenarios are endless, there are a few key consequences of a destabilized Pakistan that would have potentially serious results for the region and for the U.S. These include the continued growth and expansion of terrorist organizations in the FATA and beyond, and the potential deterioration of relations between Pakistan and India.

"In the Pakistani and Afghan contexts, [drone strikes] inflame the population and destabilize the institutions that drive regional development. In addition to taking on an unacceptable and extrajudicial toll in human life, the drone strikes in unintended ways complicate the U.S. strategic mission in Afghanistan, as well as the fragile relationship with Pakistan."<sup>224</sup> While the proliferation of extremism and terrorist attacks in Pakistan admittedly

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<sup>222</sup> The World Bank. 2015. Country Data Report for Pakistan, 1996-2014. The World Bank. <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf/c170.pdf> (19 December 2015).

<sup>223</sup> Jervis, Robert. 2009. 'Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective'. *World Politics* 61(1): 188-213.

<sup>224</sup> Hudson, L., Owens, C., & Flannes, M. (2011). Drone Warfare: Blowback from the New American Way of War. *Middle East Policy*, 18(3), 122-132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2011.00502.x>

cannot be directly correlated to U.S. drone strikes alone, it is clear that drone strikes are not succeeding in reducing the threat of terrorism. That fact, combined with the intense opposition to drone strikes and corresponding anti-Americanism that is pervasive in Pakistan, generates a significant source of insecurity for the U.S. Because of the lawless nature of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, militants fleeing the threat of drone strikes in Pakistan can easily migrate to Afghanistan, a state which is itself largely unstable. "Terrorism continues to increase in Afghanistan," according to the IEP's 2015 report, "with 38 per cent more terrorist attacks and 45 per cent more fatalities in 2014 than in 2013."<sup>225</sup> The UN reported that the Taliban is more widespread in Afghanistan than it has been at any time since 2001.<sup>226</sup> With U.S. troops now slated to remain in Afghanistan until 2017 and the confirmation that ISIL has been actively recruiting in Afghanistan, the impacts of increased terrorism in Pakistan spreading into Afghanistan have the potential to destabilize the region as a whole.<sup>227 228</sup> The nature of the security dilemma means that there is usually a sort of domino effect with threats and responses, especially given the complex and interconnected relationships between units in the current international system. A 2014 report from the Institute for Economics and Peace demonstrates the correlation between terrorism and the stability of the global structure, explaining that "[a]

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<sup>225</sup> The Institute for Economics and Peace. 2015. *Global Terrorism Index 2014*. Sydney: The Institute for Economics and Peace.

<sup>226</sup> ROSENBERG, MATTHEW, and MICHAEL SHEAR. 2015. "In Reversal, Obama Says U.S. Soldiers Will Stay In Afghanistan to 2017". *The New York Times*. [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html?_r=1) (29 November 2015).

<sup>227</sup> ROSENBERG, MATTHEW, and MICHAEL SHEAR. 2015. "In Reversal, Obama Says U.S. Soldiers Will Stay In Afghanistan to 2017". *The New York Times*. [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html?_r=1) (29 November 2015).

<sup>228</sup> Aljazeera.com. 2015. "Officials Confirm ISIL Present In Afghanistan". <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2015/01/afghan-officials-confirm-isil-presence-201511815245847478.html> (29 November 2015).

dramatic increase in deaths caused by acts defined as terrorism and internal conflicts has driven the world to one of its most unstable states since World War Two.”<sup>229</sup>

Further instability may result from the impacts of U.S. drone strikes on relations between Pakistan and India. While a nuclear Pakistan is by virtue of the security dilemma a threat to the U.S., in reality, Pakistan built its nuclear arsenal, with more recent assistance from China, as a deterrent to India, which has long been Pakistan’s most significant adversary. India and Pakistan have fought multiple wars during the last century, and as Bluth explains, “[t]he conflict is over national identity, territory, and the power position in the region.”<sup>230</sup> The conflict has been historically asymmetrical, with weaker, less stable Pakistan attempting to maintain its border security against a more powerful India. Indeed just over half of Pakistanis consider India to be their biggest threat, even more so than al Qaeda or the Taliban.<sup>231</sup> And like Afghanistan, India is experiencing the effects of increased terrorism along its contested border with Pakistan. “In a nuclear world,” Waltz explains, “the use even of conventional weapons, because it may lead others to retaliate, risks one’s own destruction.”<sup>232</sup> Now that both India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons, the potential consequences of overreaction may be grave. Sehgal Rashmi points out that “if ever India loses its patience after such repeated terror attacks and decides to retaliate against the terrorist camps, hideouts or headquarters, Pakistan may term that a conventional military attack and invoke the nuclear option.”<sup>233</sup> The U.S. has attempted to remain

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<sup>229</sup> Baker, Graeme. 2014. "Civil War and Terrorism' Driving Instability". *Aljazeera.com*. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2014/06/civil-war-terrorism-driving-instability-201461716545723939.html> (19 December 2015).

<sup>230</sup> Bluth, Christoph. 2010. "India and Pakistan: A Case of Asymmetric Nuclear Deterrence". *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 22(3): 387-406.

<sup>231</sup> Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project. 2014. "A Less Gloomy Mood in Pakistan". <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/08/27/a-less-gloomy-mood-in-pakistan/> (29 November 2015).

<sup>232</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. 1993. 'The New World Order'. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 22(2): 187-195.

<sup>233</sup> Rashmi, Sehgal. 2015. "Pakistan's Nasr Missile Is The Most Dangerous Development In South Asia". *India Abroad*. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/docview/1703535325/60D22DE18B5945EFPQ/30?accountid=14826> (29 November 2015).

allied with both states, yet “[f]or months, Pakistani authorities have been issuing increasingly alarmed warnings that the US has upset the balance of power in South Asia through its military-strategic embrace of India.”<sup>234</sup> In the event that drone strikes continue to fan the flames of terrorism in Pakistan, the resulting destabilization could worsen relations with India and result in an arms race in a region plagued by organizations that would love to obtain a nuclear weapon.

Neorealism has covered nuclear proliferation at length and many neorealist scholars have concluded that in a case where both states possess nuclear weapons, such as the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, states may actually temper their reactions to threats.<sup>235</sup> <sup>236</sup> The concept of “mutually assured destruction,” which arises from a symmetrical threat, reduces the intensity of the security dilemma. “With nuclear weapons,” Waltz explains, “states still have to be concerned with keeping power in balance, but balancing becomes much easier to do because second-strike military forces are so easy to generate.”<sup>237</sup> What neorealism does not account for, however, because it devotes little attention to non-state actors, is the unique security dilemma that might be presented by a terrorist organization in possession of nuclear capabilities. The potential augmentation of Pakistan’s nuclear program in response to India, coupled with the increases in terrorism and domestic instability that appear to be resulting from U.S. drone strikes could create a situation conducive to radical groups acquiring nuclear weapons. Dutter and Seliktar suggest that the idea of nuclear deterrence that is has been espoused by structural realists is “poorly equipped to deal with actors who appear to be irrational because of their high

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<sup>234</sup> Perera, Sampath, and Keith Jones. 2015. "US-Pakistan Summit Fails To Paper Over Growing Strategic Rift - World Socialist Web Site". *Wsws.org*. <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2015/10/31/paki-o31.html> (29 November 2015).

<sup>235</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1990. "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities". *The American Political Science Review* 84(3): 731.

<sup>236</sup> Jervis, Robert. 2001. "Variation, Change, and Transitions in International Politics". *Review of International Studies* 27(05).

<sup>237</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. 1993. "The New World Order". *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 22(2): 187-195.

propensity for risk taking and extreme cost acceptance up to and including suicide.”<sup>238</sup> While a scenario in which al Qaeda or the Taliban obtain a nuclear weapon is hypothetical and, as the Obama administration has assured us, currently unlikely, such potential unintended consequences of drone strikes in Pakistan must be assessed as part of decisions surrounding American counterterrorism strategies due to their ability to destabilize the international system as a whole.<sup>239</sup> Similarly neorealism may require refocusing in light of the asymmetrical threat of terrorism, especially as it relates to the importance of legitimacy. In order to ensure continued strategic alliances with Pakistan and India and maintain its influential power over other units in the system, the U.S. must fortify the legitimacy of its foreign policy.

#### **4.5 Undermining American Soft Power**

While the potential unintended sources of insecurity created by U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan may include worsening terror attacks, deterioration of relations with Pakistan, and instability in the region and beyond, the immediate term consequence is that America’s “soft power” is undermined. Soft power is a concept formalized in part by neoliberal political scientist Joseph Nye, who once defined the term as “the ability [of a state] to attract others by the legitimacy of [its] policies and the values that underlie them.”<sup>240</sup> In business, effective leadership is marked by the ability to achieve desired results without forcing or threatening employees to work, but rather by behaving and interacting with them in such a way that encourages them to be productive on their own. Soft power is leadership on a global scale. As the only super power in a unipolar system, the supreme leader, the U.S. has the freedom and the capability to dominate

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<sup>238</sup> Dutter, Lee E., and Ofira Seliktar. 2007. "To Martyr or Not to Martyr: Jihad is the Question, What Policy is the Answer?". *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30(5): 429-443.

<sup>239</sup> Aljazeera.com. 2009. "Obama: Pakistan Threat 'Internal'". <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2009/04/20094304394947958.html> (20 December 2015).

<sup>240</sup> Nye, Joseph S. 2004. "The Decline Of America's Soft Power: Why Washington Should Worry". *Foreign Affairs* 83(3): 16.

most any adversary in a conventional military conflict. Terrorism, however, is an asymmetric threat – organizations like al Qaeda and the Taliban know that they cannot challenge America in the traditional sense. According to Smith, “[i]n the contemporary world order, what matters are not so much the ‘old’ military and economic tools of foreign policy, but the growing influence of what Nye has termed ‘soft power’.”<sup>241</sup> In a unipolar world in which the U.S. is plagued by asymmetric threats, soft power is becoming increasingly more important. Drone strikes in Pakistan, however, may be undermining America’s soft power by generating global outrage and anti-Americanism, and also by setting precedents for behavior that the U.S. would never allow from another state, such as violations of sovereignty and international law. The less the rest of the world respects the U.S. and its policies – its legitimacy – the less it may be willing to cooperate with America and follow international norms. Similarly, other states may be inspired to use drones themselves or to rationalize other offensive behavior based on the example set by the U.S. While the U.S. always has the upper hand militarily, soft power is critical to national security because, as the War on Terror has proven, brute force cannot ameliorate every threat without unintended consequences. In 2012, Cameron Munter, the former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, illustrated this point, saying, “When I get calls from the White House, they say, ‘Dial up the pain,’ ... In Islamabad, they don’t respond well to dialing up the pain.”<sup>242</sup>

Soft power is *not*, however, a neorealist idea. In fact, neorealists generally don’t give much credit to the idea of soft power or legitimacy. Waltz said in 2007 that hard power and soft power go hand in hand – “if you got hard power you got soft power.”<sup>243</sup> However, a decade prior,

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<sup>241</sup> Smith, S. 2002. 'The End of the Unipolar Moment? September 11 and the Future of World Order'. *International Relations* 16(2): 171-183.

<sup>242</sup> McKelvey, Tara. 2012. "A Former Ambassador To Pakistan Speaks Out". *The Daily Beast*. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/20/a-former-ambassador-to-pakistan-speaks-out.html> (2 December 2015).

<sup>243</sup> Beyer, Anna. 2015. *Kenneth Waltz's Life and Thought. An Interview*. Online: Lulu.com.

he said, “People generally assume that for realists, it's always and only military power that counts. But it follows from structural realist theory that in a self-help system, how you help yourself depends on the resources you can dispose of and the situation you're in.”<sup>244</sup> Helping yourself, Waltz seems to be saying, doesn't *have* to take the form of militarily defensive or offensive measures. Similarly, two elements of Waltz's measure of power are “political stability” and “competence,” which one might compare to the requirements for soft power.<sup>245</sup> He doesn't elaborate much on these aspects in *Theory of International Politics*, but he emphasized the importance of “political competence” to state power in a 2007 interview.<sup>246</sup> So Waltz might be somewhat ambivalent on soft power, but as neorealism evolves to account for asymmetrical threats and non-state actors, so too can it recognize the magnitude of soft power. For neorealists, states do what they must, and perhaps given the structure of the system and the asymmetrical threat of terrorism, the U.S. must pursue soft power and work to maintain the legitimacy of its foreign policy. The unintended consequences of drone strikes in Pakistan and the widespread criticism they have garnered, however, may be undermining the legitimacy of the U.S. and its ability to influence other units in the system.

Pakistan is not alone in its disapproval of U.S. drone strikes. According to Pew, “[i]n 39 of 44 countries surveyed, majorities or pluralities oppose U.S. drone strikes targeting extremists in countries such as Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.”<sup>247</sup> Indeed many American foreign policy decisions have been criticized on an international scale over the last century, but drone strikes in

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<sup>244</sup> Halliday, Fred, and Justin Rosenberg. 1998. "Interview with Ken Waltz". *Review of International Studies* 24(3): 371-386.

<sup>245</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

<sup>246</sup> Beyer, Anna. 2015. *Kenneth Waltz's Life and Thought. An Interview*. Online: Lulu.com.

<sup>247</sup> Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America's Image. (2014, July 14). Retrieved from <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/global-opposition-to-u-s-surveillance-and-drones-but-limited-harm-to-americas-image/>



particular have generated widespread opposition. Much of the outrage stems from reports of high civilian casualties, as discussed above, as well as the legality, or possible lack thereof, of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan. The U.S. cites legislation such as the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) as sources of legitimacy for drone strikes in Pakistan, and Brennan “reiterated the case made by administration lawyers over the past year that the drone program is consistent with international and U.S. law,” but critics question the government’s legal rationale.<sup>248</sup> International law allows a state to use lethal force to defend itself from an imminent attack, but Medea Benjamin cites the 19<sup>th</sup> century Caroline Case, which set a precedent for pre-emptive self-defense, to prove that drone strikes do not meet the applicable threshold. She elaborates: “[A] country’s political leaders can’t legally employ lethal force simply because, maybe, at some indeterminate point in the future, they believe an individual or nation could decide to do them harm.”<sup>249</sup> As a result, Benjamin and others have argued that drone strikes violate international law, which diminishes America’s reputation as an advocate for democratic norms. Another legal issue arises from the use of secondary strikes, or “double taps,” which are carried out shortly after a drone strike and target those associated with the suspected militants who have come to help the wounded or grieve the dead. UN Special Rapporteur Christof Heyns indicated that “[i]f civilian ‘rescuers’ are indeed being intentionally targeted, there is no doubt about the law: those strikes are a war crime.”<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, some legal experts claim that the CIA, because it is a civilian agency, does not have

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<sup>248</sup> Miller, G. (2012, April 30). Brennan speech is first Obama acknowledgment of use of armed drones. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/brennan-speech-is-first-obama-acknowledgement-of-use-of-armed-drones/2012/04/30/gIQAq7B4rT\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/brennan-speech-is-first-obama-acknowledgement-of-use-of-armed-drones/2012/04/30/gIQAq7B4rT_story.html)

<sup>249</sup> Benjamin, M. (2013). Drone warfare: Killing by remote control (Updated ed.). London: Verso.

<sup>250</sup> Serle, J. (2012, June 21). UN expert labels CIA tactic exposed by Bureau ‘a war crime’ | The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. Retrieved from <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2012/06/21/un-expert-labels-cia-tactic-exposed-by-bureau-a-war-crime/>

the authority to kill anyone and its agents are thus “unlawful combatants.”<sup>251</sup> For this reason, Human Rights Watch urged the Obama administration in 2012 to transfer authority over the U.S. drone program from the CIA to the Department of Defense (DoD), which, unlike the CIA, is subject to the laws of war.<sup>252</sup> Philip Alston concludes that the administration’s secrecy has resulted in “the clear displacement of clear legal standards with a vaguely defined license to kill, and the creation of a major accountability vacuum.”<sup>253</sup> The risk here is that if the U.S. is setting a precedent of breaking international law, whether real or perceived, American soft power is diminished because, if legitimacy of state policies is the basis of soft power, the U.S. cannot reasonably expect other states to adhere to the democratic norms that it demands.

Waltz explains that “[t]he powerful state may, and the United States does, think of itself as acting for the sake of peace, justice, and well-being in the world. But these terms will be defined to the liking of the powerful, which may conflict with the preferences and the interests of others.”<sup>254</sup> Although the Obama administration has reassured Americans that the drone program is legal and effective at killing terrorists with few civilian casualties, the perception that U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan are illegal, ineffective, and causing excessive collateral damage jeopardizes America’s reputation as the world’s protector. “From the perspective of many around the world,” the Stimson Task Force on U.S. Drone Policy explains, “the United States currently appears to claim, in effect, the legal right to kill any person it determines is a member of Al-Qaeda or its associated forces, in any state on Earth, at any time, based on secret criteria and

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<sup>251</sup> Solis, G. (2010, March 12). CIA drone attacks produce America's own unlawful combatants. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/11/AR2010031103653.html>

<sup>252</sup> Human Rights Watch. 2012. 'US: Transfer CIA Drone Strikes To Military'. *Human Rights Watch*. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/20/us-transfer-cia-drone-strikes-military> (5 October 2015).

<sup>253</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston. (2010). Retrieved from <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/14session/A.HRC.14.24.Add6.pdf>

<sup>254</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1991. "America as a Model for the World? A Foreign Policy Perspective". *PS: Political Science and Politics* 24(4): 667.

secret evidence ... and with no means for anyone outside that process to identify or remedy mistakes or abuses. U.S. practices set a dangerous precedent that may be seized upon by other states — not all of which are likely to behave as scrupulously as U.S. officials.”<sup>255</sup> The U.S. would never tolerate a violation of its sovereignty or an attack on its civilians, yet the Bush and Obama administrations have required Pakistan, among other states, to endure such intrusions in the form of drone strikes. To other states and the international community, this aspect of U.S. foreign policy may appear hypocritical and undermine the legitimacy of the democratic values that America champions. And despite popular support for drone strikes among Americans,<sup>256</sup> Congress has also questioned the tactic and put pressure on the Obama administration to increase transparency around the program, particularly the targeted killings of U.S. citizens abroad.<sup>257</sup> Internal divisions within the American government regarding drone strikes may threaten the political stability that Waltz suggests is key to power, and the fact that its own law making body doubts the policies of the administration may be perceived as a lack of competence, which is key to maintaining soft power. As it relates to the goal of managing the threat of terrorism, “non-transparency fuels suspicions that the US is indifferent to the civilian casualties caused by drone strikes, a perception which in turn magnifies the deleterious political consequences of the strikes.”<sup>258</sup>

While the President has not made any strides recently to achieve more transparency, he did acknowledge in 2012 that “[t]here’s a remoteness to [drone strikes] that makes it tempting to

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<sup>255</sup> Stimson (June 2014). Recommendations and Report of the Task Force on U.S. Drone Policy. Retrieved from [http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/task\\_force\\_report\\_final\\_web\\_062414.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/task_force_report_final_web_062414.pdf).

<sup>256</sup> Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America's Image. (2014, July 14). Retrieved from <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/global-opposition-to-u-s-surveillance-and-drones-but-limited-harm-to-americas-image/>

<sup>257</sup> NBC News. 2013. 'Justice Department Memo Reveals Legal Case For Drone Strikes On Americans'. [http://investigations.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2013/02/04/16843014-justice-department-memo-reveals-legal-case-for-drone-strikes-on-americans](http://investigations.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/02/04/16843014-justice-department-memo-reveals-legal-case-for-drone-strikes-on-americans) (21 October 2015).

<sup>258</sup> Boyle, M. (n.d.). The costs and consequences of drone warfare. *International Affairs*, 1-29.

think that somehow we can, without any mess on our hands, solve vexing security problems.”<sup>259</sup>

The “mess on our hands” can be understood as the blowback from drone strikes that is undermining the legitimacy of U.S. foreign policy and American soft power such that future attempts at diplomacy may prove ineffective. As Waltz alluded, soft power and hard power are connected. Should the U.S. continue to lose soft power, the alternative response to both symmetric and asymmetric threats is hard power, or the threat of force. The security dilemma ensures that overreactions are possible, so in the absence of soft power diplomacy, threats to U.S. security, either real or perceived, will only perpetuate insecurity via the risk of miscalculation. Neorealism would benefit here from acknowledging the value of soft power as a component of the overall assessment of state power. The continued loss of America’s soft power, which in light of the unique security dilemma of asymmetrical threats is a means to national security, may destabilize the international system by hampering the ability of the U.S. to remain a unipole and allowing the resurgence of other major powers.

## 5. Conclusion

And so the security dilemma remains – America’s pursuit of security via drone strikes in Pakistan is arguably making the U.S. less secure in the long run. “In international politics,” Waltz explains, “overwhelming power repels and leads others to try to balance against it. With benign intent, the United States has behaved and, until its power is brought into balance, will continue to behave in ways that sometimes frighten others.”<sup>260</sup> Jervis notes that “to say that the world is now unipolar is neither to praise American power, let alone its leadership, nor to accuse the United States of having established a worldwide empire. It is to state a fact, but one whose meaning is

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<sup>259</sup> Hayes, Heather. 2013. "Violent Subjects: A Rhetorical Cartography of Bodies, Spaces, and Technologies in the Global War on Terror". Ph.D. University of Minnesota.

<sup>260</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 2000. 'Structural Realism after The Cold War'. *International Security* 25(1): 5-41.

far from clear, as we have neither a powerful theory nor much evidence about how unipolar systems operate.”<sup>261</sup> Due to the nature of unipolarity, the security of the U.S. is directly related to the stability of the structure. From structural theories like neorealism, according to Waltz, “we can draw some inferences about the expected behavior and fate of the units: namely, how they will have to compete with and adjust to one another if they are to survive and flourish.”<sup>262</sup> Although the U.S. maintains significant advantages over most other states, and will likely remain a super power in the near term, the evidence presented herein suggests that the unintended consequences of drone strikes in Pakistan may coalesce in such a way that American power and security is jeopardized and the international system starts to experience a destabilizing shift away from unipolarity. These same consequences must be considered as the U.S. determines its counterterrorism strategies. The asymmetric nature of terrorism requires a reevaluation of the unique security dilemma presented by the threat of terrorist attacks and the U.S. response to them. “In a November 2007 speech, [former Secretary of Defense Robert] Gates argued: The real challenges we have seen emerge since the end of the Cold War— from Somalia to the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere—make clear we in Defense need to change our priorities to be better able to deal with the prevalence of what is called “asymmetric warfare”...[I]t is hard to conceive of any country challenging the United States directly in conventional military terms—at least for some years to come. Indeed, history shows us that smaller, irregular forces—insurgents, guerrillas, terrorists—have for centuries found ways to harass and frustrate larger, regular armies and sow chaos. We can expect that asymmetric warfare will be the mainstay of the contemporary battlefield for some time.”<sup>263</sup> Perhaps it is the nature of unipolarity that encourages asymmetrical

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<sup>261</sup> Jervis, Robert. 2009. 'Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective'. *World Politics* 61(1): 188-213.

<sup>262</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1988. 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory'. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18(4): 615.

<sup>263</sup> Mazarr, Michael J. 2008. "The Folly of 'Asymmetric War'". *The Washington Quarterly* 31(3): 33-53.

threats to U.S. security, but no matter the reason, the U.S. has learned difficult lessons since 9/11 about the potential ineffectiveness of symmetric responses like ground invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq. So an asymmetric response to an asymmetric threat is generally the best option. U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan are indeed an asymmetric counter to the threat of terrorism, however the manner in which they are being authorized and executed renders their counterterrorism potential inadequate and in fact generates new threats to American security.

As Waltz points out, “[a] dilemma cannot be solved; it can more or less readily be dealt with.”<sup>264</sup> So there is no right answer here, but there may be alternatives that lessen the risk of insecurity. Jervis explains that U.S. foreign policy decisions are impacted by the structure of the international system, meaning that “[w]ithout a requirement to do otherwise, not only will the unipole resolve the conflict between its views and interests and those of others in favor of the former, but it will also fail to see that there is any tension at all.”<sup>265</sup> In the face of increased global terrorism and revenge attacks, the risk of damaging its relations with Pakistan, the potential for nuclear instability in the region, and the deterioration of its soft power, the U.S. cannot remain blind to the possibly destabilizing impacts of drone strikes. While the system will currently allow the U.S. to act in whatever way it chooses, the impacts of those choices may change the nature of the system and thereby reduce America’s ability to maintain its security and survival. So in order to deal with the threat of terrorism and also prevent the unintended threats generated by drone strikes, the U.S. must adopt a counterterrorism strategy that manages the security dilemma in the near and long term. There are many opinions from a broad range of perspectives about what the future of U.S. counterterrorism should look like, and there are

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<sup>264</sup> Waltz, Kenneth N. 1979. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

<sup>265</sup> Jervis, Robert. 2009. 'Unipolarity: A Structural Perspective'. *World Politics* 61(1): 188-213.

indeed ways that the U.S. can address the blowback from drone strikes in Pakistan and work towards regaining and maintaining its security.

Some of the policy prescriptions that have been most widely echoed are: more strategic targeting based on concrete intelligence, a heavier reliance on diplomacy over military force, and increased transparency from the U.S. government on the drone program as a whole. Cameron Munter, the former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, for example, called for “a more selective use of drones, coupled with more outreach to the Pakistani government—in short, a bigger emphasis on diplomacy and less reliance on force.”<sup>266</sup> Former CIA counterterrorism center head Robert Grenier agreed, stressing the CIA’s drone program “needs to be targeted much more finely.”<sup>267</sup> Reducing the collateral damage of drone strikes in Pakistan and ensuring that all targets are specifically identified may quell some of the outrage both within Pakistan and from the human rights communities regarding the number of civilian casualties reportedly caused by drone strikes. Similarly, engaging with Pakistan more diplomatically may thaw tensions between the two states. According to Smith, “the success of the ‘war on terrorism’ will depend far more on diplomatic negotiations to develop cooperation than it will on any military victories. Indeed, the military victories could even undermine the attempts by the US to build a political and diplomatic coalition against al-Qaeda, which after all has cells in some 50 countries, thus Nye calls for a policy of engagement with other countries in order to achieve long-term US interests by legitimizing and making more acceptable US power.”<sup>268</sup> Diplomacy doesn’t render

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<sup>266</sup> McKelvey, Tara. 2012. "A Former Ambassador To Pakistan Speaks Out". *The Daily Beast*. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/20/a-former-ambassador-to-pakistan-speaks-out.html> (2 December 2015).

<sup>267</sup> Harris, Paul. 2012. 'Drone Attacks Create Terrorist Safe Havens, Warns Former CIA Official'. *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/05/al-qaida-drone-attacks-too-broad> (21 October 2015).

<sup>268</sup> Smith, S. 2002. 'The End of the Unipolar Moment? September 11 and the Future of World Order'. *International Relations* 16(2): 171-183.

neorealism obsolete; rather “winning the hearts and minds” of those with whom we are engaged in conflict can be an intentional means to maintain state security. To facilitate diplomacy and institutionalize more strategic targeting, the U.S. government must be willing to be as transparent as security concerns allow. Lee notes that “the erosion of trust and lack of clarity in U.S. drone policy produces strategic and tactical confusion within U.S. defense and intelligence agencies,” while the lack of accountability for drone strikes diminishes the legitimacy of American counterterrorism efforts.<sup>269</sup> Once the U.S. is willing to acknowledge and take responsibility for targeted killings, its rhetoric about the precision and legality of drone strikes might be more widely accepted.

While such measures may indeed reduce to some extent the potentially destabilizing impacts of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, I argue that the unique security dilemma presented by the asymmetric threat of terrorism may require the discontinuation of U.S. drone strikes altogether, except perhaps in the most extraordinary of circumstances. Unfortunately, drone strikes and other U.S. behaviors have intensified the threat of terrorist attacks such that confronting the threat is crucial to national security and the stability of the international system. However, the cessation of drone strikes in Pakistan does not correlate to a policy of doing nothing. Structural or neorealist theory can be evolved in this context to not only recognize the growing importance of non-state actors in international relations, but also to acknowledge that “smart” power may well be the best way for units in the international system to maintain security and prolong their survival. Military capabilities will always remain an option for security-seeking states, yet the failures of both symmetric responses, such as the U.S. ground invasion in

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<sup>269</sup> Hayes, Heather Ashley. 2013. 'Violent Subjects: A Rhetorical Cartography of Bodies, Spaces, and Technologies in the Global War on Terror'. Ph.D. University of Minnesota.



Afghanistan, as well as asymmetric replies, like drone strikes in Pakistan, to ameliorate the threat of terrorism demonstrate the need to explore alternative solutions. In 2011, then Secretary of State Hilary Clinton emphasized “the need to elevate diplomacy and development alongside defense—a “smart power” approach to solving global problems.”<sup>270</sup> Hudson, Owens, and Flannes similarly call for “stabilizing and strengthening governance in regions where extremists operate.”<sup>271</sup> Indeed a stable, politically functional Pakistan would be a great counter balance to the threat of terrorism and the other negative consequences that have arisen from U.S. drone strikes in the FATA. Acknowledging arguments that it’s impossible to negotiate with terrorists, Medea Benjamin suggests that “there are always people who can be enticed to talk about peace.”<sup>272</sup>

Pakistan’s history and domestic structure are complex, and there is no simple solution to the threat of terrorism, but given the evidence presented above, it is clear that current U.S. counterterrorism strategies are not sufficient to maintain national security. Tkacik reiterates this fact, explaining that “[o]vert and heavy-handed US involvement is likely to trigger a backlash in Pakistani society against the United States and any cooperating Pakistani government. Rather, the US should increase the use of soft power, making the United States more attractive to Pakistan.”<sup>273</sup> He calls for “unobtrusive engagement,” which could assume various forms. Pakistan has engaged in counterterrorism measures of its own, even recently launching its own drone strike against militants in the FATA. Leveraging soft power, the U.S. could, for example,

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<sup>270</sup> Clinton, Hilary. 2010. "Leading Through Civilian Power: Redefining American Diplomacy and Development". *Foreign Affairs* 89(6).

<sup>271</sup> Hudson, Leila, Colin Owens, and David Callen. 2012. "Drone Warfare in Yemen: Fostering Emirates Through Counterterrorism?". *Middle East Policy* 19(3).

<sup>272</sup> Benjamin, M. (2013). *Drone warfare: Killing by remote control* (Updated ed.). London: Verso.

<sup>273</sup> Tkacik, M. 2010. "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program and Implications for US National Security". *International Relations* 24(2): 175-217.

assist Pakistan in developing its own capabilities to combat the threat of terrorism, thereby also addressing the threat of terrorism to the U.S. “Nye calls for a policy of engagement with other countries in order to achieve long-term US interests by legitimizing and making more acceptable US power.”<sup>274</sup> Legitimacy is key here. “When actors wield force, because of the social context in which it is deployed, actors must legitimate this practice within the logics of the community. Such legitimatizations help reinforce the logic of these institutions.”<sup>275</sup> Neorealism can still have important explanatory power in international relations, but it must adapt to emerging asymmetric threats and account for the ways in which smart power, predicated on legitimacy, may be vital to state security and survival. In the absence of a shift in U.S. foreign policy away from drone strikes in Pakistan and toward a more diplomatic approach to the threat of terrorism, the stability of the international system may begin to falter. The security dilemma, whether symmetric or not, is ultimately never resolved. Nevertheless, the U.S. has the capability address the distinctly asymmetrical security dilemma of terrorism in such a way that maintains the security and the permanence of the current global structure. Whether or not the U.S. government recognizes that opportunity and revises its counterterrorism strategy accordingly has yet to be seen. Neo- or structural realist theory posits that balances of power, such as unipolarity, will always be challenged eventually. As Kissinger notes, “[e]very international order must sooner or later face the impact of two tendencies challenging its cohesion: either a redefinition of legitimacy or a significant shift in the balance of power.”<sup>276</sup> Ultimately, the U.S. has the power to control its legitimacy and to determine when, or if, such a system-level shift may occur.

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<sup>274</sup> Smith, S. 2002. 'The End of the Unipolar Moment? September 11 and the Future of World Order'. *International Relations* 16(2): 171-183.

<sup>275</sup> Lowenheim, O., and B. J. Steele. 2010. "Institutions of Violence, Great Power Authority, and the War on Terror". *International Political Science Review* 31(1): 23-39.

<sup>276</sup> Kissinger, Henry. 2015. *World Order*. New York: Penguin Books.

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