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Droning On: A critical analysis of American policy and news discourse on drone strikes

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MSc in Media, Communication and Development

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Sadaf Khan

ABSTRACT

At the beginning of his first term in office, President Obama announced a revamping of American national security policy and announced a pullout plan for the American troops in Afghanistan. This pullout has now begun. By the end of 2015, the majority of American troops in Afghanistan would head back home. It was in this context, that the drone policy was reviewed and the use of drones for personality strikes started. Drone warfare is a part of America's global war on terrorism. Media studies on the war on terrorism have highlighted the creation of a new discourse, within which the American government was able to legitimize various actions that would otherwise be deemed immoral and illegal.

The objective of this research is to look at the discourse built around the drone warfare – the research looks at policy texts in the form of presidential speeches and their mediation in two American newspapers. I have looked at the discursive techniques employed by the Obama administration to justify and legitimize the use of drones. The research is also concerned with the identity contraction of the Other and the discourse built around civilian casualties of the drone strikes. The evidence conducted through a critical discourse analysis of the text suggests that the drone attacks are being situated within a discourse of self- defense and presented within the 'war on terror'-frame. The administration evokes the theory of Global Battleground formulated by former President Bush and his Vice President Dick Cheney. The discourse utilizes war on terrorism, the right to self-defense and the non-viability of the other option – that of military invasion – as the moral justification for conducting drone strikes. The media texts analysed do not really challenge these justifications; however they do raise questions about the lack of transparency and accountability. The civilian victims of drone strikes are mentioned merely in passing or completely ignored in both policy and media texts – none try to construct an identity for these victims as they are simply presented as an unfortunate but necessary cost of war.

INTRODUCTION

> Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done…From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime…And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.
> (George W. Bush, 2001)

Within this statement given by former American President, George W. Bush, there exists a dichotomy – a discourse that pitches good vs. bad and sets forth the tone for a reality that constituted the war on terrorism (WOT from here on). From President Bush's statement, we can infer an element of perceived power; by forcing the international community to choose sides, he displays America's strength not just as a global superpower but also upholds the state as the defender of good in an evil world. Thirteen years later, this power has manifested in the form of two military invasions, countless human rights violations in Abu-Ghraib and Guantanamo and lethal strikes on foreign soil. And yet, America continues to term this war, "a just war", a war waged "proportionally", "in self-defense" (Obama, 2013).

Perhaps struck by the magnitude of the attacks, the American media initially rallied by the flag to present a singular frame of WOT. "The words chosen to describe these events (Sep. 11) were not simply a neutral reflection of what had happened, but actually worked to enforce a particular interpretation and meaning, most significantly that they were an 'act of war', a 'war on terrorism' appeared reasonable and logical" (Jackson, 2005, p. 5). "The power of consensual news frames, exemplified by the 'war on terrorism' frame in America cannot be underestimated. A one-sided news frame can block reception of contrary independent evidence" (Norris et al., 2003, pp. 283-84). The narrative built by the administration and media to define WOT is heavily borrowed from military discourse. This discourse was constructed in a way that critics identified as unreflective at best and propagandistic at worst (see Dimaggio, 2008; Kellner, 2003).

American administration relied heavily on the creation of binaries, specifically a dichotomic construction of "barbarism" against "civilization" and "freedom" against "tyranny" (Jackson, 2005, p. 31). Through this construction, the 'good' United States and all the civilized world is pitched against an evil, barbaric Other. Other scholars have highlighted the administration's attempt to construct the attacks as attacks on all civilized values (see Ryan 2004; Carpentier

2007). Through a "carefully constructed public discourse, officials have created a new social reality where terrorism threatens to destroy everything that ordinary people hold dear - their lives, their democracy, their freedom, their way of life, their civilization" (Jackson, 2005, pp. 1-2). It is within these new policy frames that space for limiting civil rights and defining new legal boundaries was created.

This research looks at the discourse around drone warfare today.

Situating the drone discourse today

> In the beginning we create the enemy. Before the weapon comes the image. We think others to death and then invent the battle-axe or the ballistic missiles with which to actually kill them. (Keen, 1986, 10)

In October 2001, an unmanned aircraft hovered over a group of Taliban troops in Afghanistan. The Taliban were surrounding the Northern Alliance commander Abdul Haq. The presence of American drones in Afghanistan was not new: In 2000, another drone had captured a photograph of a man that CIA suspected was Bin Laden. However, the drone hovering over Taliban commanders in 2001 was different. This drone was fully armed and capable of taking down a target. It was here, that the first missiles were fired by American predator drones and a new chapter of the WOT began. Between 2002 and 2007, the Bush administration reportedly conducted "personality" strikes targeting high-value leaders of armed, non-state groups (see Williams 2010; Hudson et al. 2011; Berger & Tiedmann, 2010). Under President Obama, the program expanded to include "profile" or so-called "signature" strikes based on a "pattern of life" analysis. According to US authorities, the targets were "groups of men who bear certain signatures, or defining characteristics associated with terrorist activity, but whose identities aren't known" (IHRCR & GJC, 2012, . 12). So, "increasing use of weaponized drone technology in areas outside traditional armed conflict has corresponded with an expansion in the scope of individuals the US claims legal authority to target" (Columbia Law School, 2012, 73).

> The abuse of power under the banner of WOT is already well advanced - from unconstitutional powers to try 'enemy combatants' in secret courts to manipulation of intelligence information about Iraq and unconstitutional violation of civil liberties in America and elsewhere (Jackson, 2005, 3).

The drone warfare is a part of this abuse and has started becoming the focus of an increasing body of research. Drone attacks, by their very nature, remain difficult to report (see

Tuszynski, 2013; Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 2014; McKelvey, 2011). Secrecy surrounding targets of drone strikes has affected the media discourse that remains largely ambiguous about facts and figures. Additionally, the difference in President Bush and President Obama's drone policies and significant events like targeting of American citizens seem to have triggered a reaction within American media. The strikes have also raised concerns internationally. From Stanford University to United Nations, the legality and impact of drones is now being studied. This research aims to look at the discourse within which the legality and morality of drone strikes has been established.

Conceptual Framework

> The discourse of the 'war on terrorism' has a clear *political* purpose; it works for someone and for something; it is an exercise of power… the language of the 'war on terrorism' actually *prevents* rather than facilitates the search for solutions to political violence; that it is entrenching cycles of global violence which will be extremely difficult to break. (Jackson, 2005, 4)

Notice that Jackson holds the *language of the war* not the mechanics of it as an element of concern. Following the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers, security and military discourse began to overpower general political and social discourse. But even entrenched in a military discourse, the decision to invade Afghanistan and Iraq, be it the deliberate abuse of civil liberties in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib or the continued use of armed drones in countries that are sovereign and independent, all the measures taken by the United States administration have been deeply political. In so far, this research is based on theories of political communication, mainly the concept of framing and the creation of political rhetoric.

Framing can be defined as "the ability to organize perception and interpretation of events and actions in a way that excludes other accounts of reality" (Dimitrova and Stromeback, 2005, 405). According to Entman,

> Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation and / or treatment recommendation to the item described (Entman, 1993, 52).

If "the text emphasizes in a variety of mutually reinforcing ways that the glass is half full, the evidence of social science suggests that relatively few in the audience will conclude it is half empty" (Entman, 1993, 56). So "framing does not necessarily tell people what to think, but

how to think about an issue" (Shaw et al. 2004, 61). "These frames seem to go beyond the commonly held definition of attribute because they are more than just characteristics or qualities of the subject. They could be considered aspects of *presentation* of the issue, however, if not attributes of the issue itself" (Shaw et al., 2004, 263).

Scheufele (2000) says that "subtle changes in the description of a situation invoke interpretive schemas that influence the interpretation of incoming information rather than making certain aspects of the issue more salient"(qtd. in. Shaw et al., 2004, 264). In the case of the drone warfare, framing of the enemy forces or the Other by political elite and media, tells the public how to perceive the targets of drone attacks. Ideally, a free and fair press ensures the creation of a space for counter narratives of the political elite's frame. In case of the WOT as we have seen, initially counter frames were largely missing and counter narratives originating from the targets themselves are hard to come by. Thus, American administration and the American media enjoyed a "discursive control" (Macdonald, 2003, 39) over the drone discourse, enabling them to create the common wisdom around the use of drones.

This research tries to identify whether the American media offer any counter narratives and frames to challenge the official narrative. Here we come to the second underlying concept in this research, that of political rhetoric. The study of political rhetoric dates back to Aristotle (384-322 BC) who defines rhetoric as "a practical art of lying at the boundaries of ethics and politics" (Cope 1867; Kennedy 1991 qtd. in. Grobeck, 2004, 136). For a democratic state to go to war "public discussion and debate are essential, because leaders are obliged to rule the sovereign people by means of constant persuasion, rhetoric is absolutely central" (Kane and Patapan, 2010 qtd. in Condor et al., 2012, 2). While political rhetoric is important in domestic political communication, it gains a further importance when it comes to "foreign policy matters as citizens are highly responsive to what they see and hear from political elites – more so than in most aspects of domestic policy. Hence, the degree of public support for a presidential foreign policy initiative depends on the mix of elite rhetoric about the president's policy to which citizens are exposed"(Baum & Groeling, 2010, 3). In this case, the American media's initial alignment with the official frame of war on terror became a tool to strengthen political rhetoric, helping the state to build a *system of representation* (Hall, 1997, p. 17), in which US and its allies were the joint force of good against an *axis of evil*. The media presented a discourse that was synchronized with the narrative of political elite and "when citizens observe elites expressing bipartisan support for a policy, they typically respond favorably" (Larson qtd. in. Baum & Groeling, 2010, 3). The American media, by

aligning with the state narrative, facilitated what Foucault terms *'capillary movement'* allowing state discourse to seep into the masses and take root.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As the NATO pullout from war-torn Afghanistan picks pace, a new chapter begins in the war on terrorism and questions surrounding the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the drone warfare gain importance. Jackson sees this as "both a set of institutional practices and an accompanying set of assumptions, beliefs, forms of knowledge and political cultural narratives. It's an entire language contained in a truly voluminous group of 'texts'- any act of written or spoken speech, from speeches to interviews, to postings on websites to e-mails between officials" (Jackson, 2005, 15). Marres points out that "we need to know not only how [drones] are deployed, where they are deployed and with what consequences, but also - what is the wider political context in which this can happen" (Marres, 2013). This research attempts to explore this wider 'political context' and explore the narrative built by the Obama Administration and to analyse how the American press responds to official narratives. In this research, I will try to answer the following research questions;

R1. How is the drone warfare framed in public policy speeches by President Obama and his administration?

R1a. Which discursive strategies are used to construct the 'other'?

R1b. How are the civilian victims of drone warfare framed?

R1c. Which moral justifications are used to legitimize targeted killings?

R2. How does the American press respond to public policy speeches by President Obama and his administration?

R2a. How does the press's construction of the 'other' differ from the administration's?

R2b. How are the civilian victims of drone warfare framed in press?

R2c. Does the press use the same contextual frames as used by the administration?

I am primarily concerned with the issues of representation and power within the official and media discourse. The findings of this research should thus add to the understanding of narratives around the drone warfare and contribute to the theoretical debate about the exercise of power and resistance through politics of representation.

METHODOLOGY

This research is concerned with the construction and mediation of discourse surrounding drone warfare. These questions are directly related to construction of thematic realities and identities within textual discourse, dealing with underlying issues of power, morality and ideology – highlighting a need to examine discourse at multiple levels. Thus, a critical approach to discourse analysis has been employed. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) doesn't "just describe the discursive practices but also shows how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies" (Fairclough, 1992, 12). The research has been designed by mainly drawing upon CDA as outlined by Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2001, 2007) and Van Djik (1988, 1997) to ensure that the analysis looks at various layers of discourse – text, practice and context. The resulting analysis can illustrate a holistic picture of the American administration's and press's discursive relationship around the issue of drone warfare.

Methodology rationale

With 2400 people targeted since Obama administration's first drone strike in Pakistan (Serle, 2014), the Obama administration has had a six year long run with the drones. With such a long span of related discourse to cover, "it is important to identify and delimit a portion of reality" (Jensen, 2002, 237). Keeping this in mind, this research has been designed as a series of case studies, outlining some key developments in President Obama's drone strategy. A case here is defined as a "unit … with defined boundaries that the researcher can demarcate or 'fence in'" (Merriam, 1999, 27 qtd. in. in Brown, 2008,, 3)[1]. The following two cases have been identified as pivotal points in the Obama administration's drone strategy:

i. The targeting of an American citizen Anwar Awlaki[2] in Yemen;
ii. President Obama's speech on 23rd March 2013 at the National Defence University defining the new counter terrorism policy.

[1]A similar research methodology was employed in a pilot study conducted for methodological critique (essay for MC4M1). Only one case and a limited number of media texts were analysed for the pilot. In this research, the same methodology has been further developed.

[2] There are various discrepancies in American Media regarding the actual spelling of Anwar Awlaki, who name is alternately spelled as Awlaki and Aulaqi. In this research the spelling 'Anwar Awlaki' is being adopted. For more on the controversy surrounding the actual spelling of his name, please see a Washington Post article on the same at the following URL - http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ask-the-post/post/anwar-al-aulaqi-becomes-al-awlaki-at-the-washington-post/2011/10/03/gIQAdxICIL_blog.html

The discourse generated by the administration and media during and after these incidents is being studied as a reflection of the drone discourse. One of the objectives of a case study is the "provision of integrated interpretations of situations and contexts" (Stake, 1995, 102 qtd. in Brown, 2002, 7) and such studies can at times be used "to arrive at broad generalizations based on case study evidence" (Yin, 1989, 15). However, in this particular research, the limitations imposed by choosing a small unit of a larger discourse are compounded by the method of analysis, so the inferences made are considered only *a part of the 'general' discourse, not a complete reflection* of it.

The texts that this research aims to analyse are multi-layered and heavily embedded with ideological notions constructed, distributed and manipulated through a carefully designed discourse of power. Since the research is concerned with political texts and their mediation i.e. meaning making and their interpretation, a critical approach to discourse analysis has been taken. Here discourse is seen as being multi layered, and deals "both with the properties of the text and talk and with what is usually called the context, that is, the other characteristics of the social situation or the communicative event that may systematically influence text or talk" (Djik, 1997, 3). Discourse is seen not just as a "practice of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning" (Fairclough, 1992). So, it is necessary to examine closely the actual text and the connotations, the history and the ideologies that this text evokes. An important perspective in CDA related to the notion of "power" is that, "it is very rare that a text is the work of any one person. In texts discursive differences are negotiated; they are governed by differences in power which is in part encoded in and determined by discourse and genre. Therefore texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance" (Wodak, 2006, 4). Employing CDA as the main analytical technique will allow for an examination of the interplay between texts, created and interpreted by two hubs of power; the administration and the press.

Since discourse analysis is a particularly subjective method of inquiry, it is important to disclose my own background. As a journalist from Pakistan, I have interacted with civilian victims of drone strikes and have worked on the challenges associated with reporting drone strikes in Pakistan (see Tuszynski, 2013). Keeping this in mind, I have tried to ensure objectivity and transparency by:

a. Consulting with the Bureau of Investigative Journalism[3] (see Ross, 2014) for identification of cases to be analysed, thus eliminating the chance of focusing on incidents that might be more related to Pakistan.
b. Trying to diversify the media texts by focusing on the type of selected texts rather than their content.
c. Creating a focused framework for analysis that limits (but does not eliminate) the potential for subjective interpretation.

Research design and sampling method

The research design is based on Fairclough's three dimensional model of analysis (see Fairclough, 1992). In Fairclough's framework, discourse operates on three dimensions: first as text, second as discursive practice, and third as social practice i.e. "the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is a feature" (qtd. in. Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, 448-449). With this framework as the foundation, the framework for CDA has been operationalised as follows:

Table 1: Operationalised Framework for Critical Discourse Analysis

Discursive Level	Fairclough's Framework	Operationalization[4]
Linguistic	Discourse as text includes "the linguistic features and organization of concrete instances of discourse. Choices and pattern in vocabulary(e.g. wording, metaphor),grammar(e.g. transitivity, modality), cohesion (e.g. conjunction, schemata), and text structure(e.g. episoding, turn-taking system) should be systematically analyzed" (Fairclough, 1992 qtd. in Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2014, p. 448)	1. Vocabulary, verbs and adjectives used with key elements like drone attacks, the United States, Al Qaida, terrorists, WOT etc. 2. Key terms employed to construct the identity of 'self' and 'other'.
Discursive	Discourse as "something that is produced, circulated, distributed, consumed in society. Fairclough sees these processes largely in terms of the	1. Larger discourses evoked and utilised by the administration and the press for e,g. morality, legality, justice, just war etc.

[3] The consultation was done with Alice Ross, a reporter with the Bureau of Investigative Journalism who manages the Bureau's Drone Project. The consultation was done at the City University Office of the Bureau and included an informal talk with Alice regarding the key moments in President Obama's drone policy. The selected case studies were all identified by Ms. Ross among a few others.

[4] The same framework was employed in my pilot study, submitted as methodological critique essay of MC4M1.

	circulation of concrete linguistic objects (specific texts or text-types that are produced, circulated, consumed, and so forth)" (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 448).	2. Structural prioritization within discursive texts – which discourses are placed in a position of priority and which ones are neglected
Contextual Ideological	Discourse-as-social-practice, i.e. "the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is a feature" (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2014, p. 449). Hegemony concerns power that is achieved through constructing alliances and integrating classes and groups through consent, so that "the articulation and rearticulation of orders of discourse is corresponding one stake in hegemonic struggle" (Fairclough, 1993 qtd. in Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 449).	1. Which historical elements are being consumed to explain and legitimize the drone warfare? 2. Which powers / alliances and institutions are being talked about in connection to the drone warfare policy?

In addition to the discursive elements present in the text, we are also "concerned with silences". Rosenberg (2003, 4) states that "silences of a text are often as important as its inclusions" (qtd. in Jackson, 2005, 19) and CDA requires a "sensitivity to what is not said as well" (Gill, 1996, 146). Therefore, any major omissions in either policy or news texts will be seen as reflections of the conflict in discursive domains.

Another important element of the research design is the actual selection of the policy and news texts to be analysed. This choice is fairly simple when it comes to policy texts. Each of the two selected cases have been led or followed by a public speech by President Obama. For each case a singular speech has been selected as being representative of the policy discourse (see Table 2).

Table 2: Selected Policy Texts for the Case Studies

Case	Selected Policy Text	Rationale
Targeting of Anwar Awlaki	Relevant excerpts from President Obama's remarks at the "Change of Office" Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Ceremony.	This speech was given the same day that Awlaki was targeted. The selected excerpt was the first official confirmation of the killing.
Counter Terrorism Policy Speech at NDU	Relevant excerpts from the President's hour long speech at the National Defense University.	Various officers within the Obama administration hailed this speech as an outline of the direction WOT and drones are to take in the coming years.

These texts are fairly lengthy and include multiple themes that fall outside the domain of this research, so only relevant excerpts that directly comment upon drone warfare or lay down the related context for drone strikes are being analysed.

The selection of media texts was trickier. Two newspapers; the New York Times and Washington Post have been selected to represent the news discourse. Both these papers are among 10 most widely circulated papers in the United States. The websites of these papers are also among the top ten most visited news websites globally (See Associated Press, 2013). So, in terms of reach, both these papers enjoy a large number of American and International audiences. Four articles from each paper reporting or commenting on each of the two cases have been analysed. The following principles have been applied to the selected texts:

i. The four articles from each paper should be varied in type i.e. editorial, a news analysis, an opinion etc.
ii. There should be at least one article that was published immediately following the release of the policy text.
iii. Where possible (in the case of Awlaki's targeting and President Obama's policy speech) one follow up article from each paper commemorating the anniversary of the incident has been included in analysis

The articles[5] have been collected by using the advanced /targeted search function on the New York Times and Washington Post websites – the key search terms being Anwar Awlaki (and Anwar Aulaki), nomination John Brennan and Obama NDU Speech / Obama Drone Speech. On both sites, all three cases have been prioritized enough to warrant separately organized sections, with New York Times actually offering an archival chronology of coverage of the events.

Limitations and reflections on research design

> If news discourse can "manufacture consent", then the work involved in this process must be done on a text-by-text basis; by extension, if a text is doing its bit in the construction and

[5]It should be noted that the texts analysed for this research are the web / online versions of the articles. In some cases these texts may have been modified in the actual print addition. The decision to use the online version has been taken as this version presumably has a larger and more global outreach than the print version.

> maintenance of ideology, with all the consequences which flow from such semiotic processes, then the act of text-making must itself be complex.
>
> (Lukin, 2013, 439)

In fact, this process is so complex, that it is impossible to decipher the whole discourse in a brief research. The scale of this research has been limited at various levels; first by the scope of the research question, then by the selection of limited news sources and finally by focusing on two case studies. In addition, the research method employed is subjective and qualitative, limiting the findings only to the cases and the sources under observation.

Theoretically, the research questions could also be explored by employing content analysis as the main research method, to allow for a more generalizable analysis. However, while content analysis would have been useful in creating a baseline of key themes explored in the discourse, this method would not be very effective in studying the discourse closely. It was felt that the research was more suited for qualitative research methods, which are "particularly good at examining and developing theories that deal with the role of meanings and interpretations" (Ezzy, 2002, 1). Qualitative research allows one to look at; "the concept of *meaning*, its embedding in and orientation of social action", data in "*naturalistic contexts*" and third, the researcher as an "*interpretative subject"* (Jensen, 2002, 236). In this case, the research question deals with all three of the defined components of the qualitative method. However, a more detailed research study would benefit from a combination of content analysis and CDA to create a statistical grounding for the qualitative, theoretical analysis obtained through CDA.

Even though CDA is selected as the analytical method for this research, the method itself has been subject to certain critiques. First, it does not eliminate subjectivity. From selection of the texts to interpretations, it runs the risk of being affected by the researcher's 'interpretative tendencies' (see Fairclough, 1992, 35). Also, in CDA "texts become objects of a political economy; the conditions of production of texts and more specifically the way in which the resources that go into text are being managed in societies are rarely discussed" (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000, 460). In other words, CDA does not analyze "how a text can be read in many ways, or under what social circumstances it is produced and consumed" (Widdowson 1998 qtd. in Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000, 455). In this case this means that simply by analysing the texts not much can be said about the conditions under which the political and media discourses have been shaped or the social impact their distribution would have. This particular research, designed as a series of case studies, also runs the risk of overgeneralisation (see Dijk, 1993, 252) and thus does not claim to reflect general attitude of the American press towards drone warfare policy.

The results of this research should thus be simply seen as being reflective of the mediation trends of the political discourse on drones, only *in the specific cases analyzed* and only *within the selected newspapers*, and should *not* be seen as being indicative of larger trends in the American press.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

In this section, we will first separately analyze each of the three selected cases and then discuss similarities and differences among the findings of the two cases. The text analysis has been conducted without the use of a textual analysis tool: it has been conducted manually, in accordance with the previously defined framework.

Case I – Drone strike on American citizen Anwar Awlaki

> Earlier this morning, Anwar al-Awlaki -- a leader of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula -- was killed in Yemen. (Applause.) The death of Awlaki is a major blow to al Qaeda's most active operational affiliate. Awlaki was the leader of external operations for al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. In that role, he took the lead in planning and directing efforts to murder innocent Americans. (Obama, 2011)

So starts a speech by President Obama that marks the first official acknowledgement of killing of Anwar al-Awlaki described by the President as "the leader of external operations for al Qaeda's most active operational affiliate" and by the press as an "American born radical cleric" (Finn, 2011). Awlaki was killed on 30th September 2011 in a targeted drone strike in northern Yemen, along with another American Sameer Khan. The lead of the President's speech posits Awlaki as the Other – removed from his American heritage: In over 360 words dedicated to Awlaki's death, not once does the President mention his American nationality. Awlaki's heritage is not the only factor ominously missing from the President's discourse – the method of the killing, a targeted drone strike, the first to deliberately target an American citizen – has been clearly left out of the initial narrative. Taking a critical discourse analysis approach, we have to take into account these textual silences as "powerful aspects of discourse" (Huckin, Andrus, & Clary-Lemon, 2012, p. 110). By the virtue of silence, leaving out two important aspects of this killing – the use of predator drones and the American nationality of Awlaki – the President has established which 'facts' he prioritizes within this story.

Within this short speech Awlaki is described as;

1. Leader of external operations for al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
2. Having taken the lead in planning and directing efforts to murder innocent Americans
3. Having directed the failed attempt to blow up U.S. cargo planes
4. Having called on individuals in the United States and around the globe to kill innocent men, women and children
5. Being directly responsible for the deaths of many Yemeni citizens
6. Having had a hateful ideology -- and targeting innocent civilians

This text is representative of the construction of the enemy, the Other, in the policy speeches and statements made by the Obama administration. President Obama goes on to say:

> Working with Yemen and our other allies and partners, we will be determined, we will be deliberate, we will be relentless, we will be resolute in our commitment to destroy terrorist networks that aim to kill Americans, and to build a world in which people everywhere can live in greater peace, prosperity and security.

"Rhetoric and composition has always been concerned with the power of spoken and written discourse, in particular the ways in which language can be used to persuade audiences about important public issues" (Huckin, Andrus, & Clary-Lemon, 2012, 109). In this case, President Obama has established the killing as an important public issue (while omitting the strategy used), he has also established the powerful position that the United States enjoy – consider his emphasis on action ("we will be determined, we will be deliberate, we will be relentless, we will be resolute"), consider the position accorded to the United States ("we will be resolute in our commitment to destroy terrorist networks that aim to kill Americans, and to build a world in which people everywhere can live in greater peace, prosperity and security"). Foucault has called discourse "a system of representation" and has held that things mean something and are true only "within a specific historical context" (qtd. in Hall, 2001, 74). Applying this theory to President Obama's speech, we can see the history of 9/11, WOT and his successful operation against Bin Laden being subtly played. The audience has a presumed knowledge of America's role in 'building a world' for people everywhere and they are supposed to know why any explanation of a targeted killing without due process is not necessary here. However, this very presumption on the President's part seems to have created dissent in the selected press. To study media's response to the administration's

discourse, I have analyzed a total of eight articles from the Washington Post and The New York Times (see Table 3 overleaf).

Table 3 : Policy and media texts selected for analysis of case I

Source	Selected Text
Policy Text	Obama's first Speech on Al Awlaki
Washington Post	*Opinion* - A hint of deterrence in U.S. drone-war strategy
Washington Post	*Editorial* - Administration should do more to defend the Awlaki strike
Washington Post	*News Analysis*- Secret U.S. memo sanctioned killing of Aulaqi
Washington Post	*Review* - President Obama, did you or did you not kill al Awlaki
New York Times	*News Analysis* - Awlaki Strike shows US shift to drones in terror fight
New York Times	*News Comment* - Secret US Memo made a legal case to kill a citizen
New York Times	*Opinion* - A Just Act of War
New York Times	*Editorial* - A Thin Rationale for Drone Killings

The selected articles vary in their analysis and reaction to Awlaki's targeting – from "we don't have enough drones to kill all the enemies we will make if we turn the world into a free-fire zone" (Ignatius, 2011), to "Mr. Obama is acting in sync with international law in defending the country against an enemy belligerent who forfeited constitutional protections" (Washington Post Editorial, 2011), to "while no court approved the killing of Mr. Awlaki, it is not accurate to say that he was targeted without due process" (L. Goldsmith, 2011) – there is a varying degree of acceptance for the attack in the American press. However, one question is present in all of the analyzed articles – the question of transparency.

Articles in Washington Post have called the drone strategy "unannounced targeting policy" (Ignatius, 2011), mentioning that "officials refused to disclose the exact legal analysis used to authorize targeting Aulaqi" (Finn, 2011) and raise the question "How can we be free if our government has the power to kill us in secret?" (Cole, 2013). Articles in the New York Times lament the "blurring of military-intelligence boundaries" (Shane & Shanker, 2011), criticize administration's refusal "to acknowledge or discuss its role in the drone strike that killed Mr. Awlaki" (Savage, 2011) and in a review published after the 'secret memo' was made public, state that "rationale provides little confidence that the lethal action was taken with real care" (Washington Post Editorial 2, 2014). All the analysed articles put an emphasis onthe need for transparency and a mechanism of accountability.

Defining his framework, Fairclough states that in any representation it is important to pay attention to what is in the "foreground" and what is in the "background" (1995, p. 4). While analysing the policy text, the identity formation of Awlaki as the evil other foreshadows all other parts of the discourse. In the background though, we see the construction of the US as a legitimate power whose interventions in sovereign states are not just justified but actually appreciated. In the media texts, the order of what is in the 'foreground' and what is in the 'background' is almost reversed; most of the media articles have used terms like 'reportedly' to distance themselves from the negative attributes officially given to Awlaki – with one writer asserting that "Obama administration never charged Awlaki with any crime and has never even acknowledged that it sent the drone that killed him" (Cole, 2013). The newspapers appear to resist the official emphasis on Awlaki's alleged crimes. Instead, in the foreground are questions about the need for transparency.

Case I – Findings at a glance
Killing of American citizen Anwar Al-Awlaki

On Drone Warfare

- President Obama doesn't even mention that a drone strike is responsible for the killing.
- The media text expresses a concern with the lack of transparency and accountability.
- The media text expresses a concern with the potential consequences of allowing the killing of an American without due process.
- Neither the President nor the media have said much about drone targets from other nationalities.

On construction of the Other

- The President has used negative associations every time Awlaki has been mentioned in his speech; he has been linked with murder of innocent Americans multiple times.
- The press has been more cautious in the construction of Awlaki – his negative attributes have been prefixed with words like 'reported to be', 'accused of', 'thought to be' etc.
- Most of the selected articles do not make a mention of civilian targets of drones.

Justifications of drone strikes

- The President has used 'imminent threat' to the United States as his main justification – the tone of the speech suggests that the President doesn't think a justification is due.
- The media is largely sceptical of the offered justifications and demands more transparency.

Contextual placement

- President Obama's speech remains fixed within the war against terrorism frame
- Different media articles have used legal contexts, human rights discourse, civil liberties discourse and historical wars to bring in question different aspects of the drone warfare

Case II – President Obama's new counter terrorism policy

> With the collapse of the Berlin Wall, a new dawn of democracy took hold abroad, and a decade of peace and prosperity arrived here at home. And then, on September 11, 2001, we were shaken out of complacency. Thousands were taken from us, as clouds of fire and metal and ash descended upon a sun-filled morning. This was a different kind of war. No armies came to our shores, and our military was not the principal target. Instead, a group of terrorists came to kill as many civilians as they could. (Obama, 2013)

Aristotle, discussing the significance of the choice of words and their political undertones states that "the features of our speech, including our lexicon, style, stance, and use of rhetoric define what we perceive as 'normal', 'acceptable', 'real' and 'possible'" (qtd. in Green, 2007, p. 5). Looking at the features of President Obama's speech from an Aristotelian perspective, we can see the President employing various discursive strategies to define and redefine the normal and the acceptable – he evokes historical contexts, compares and contrasts, forms associations – to build a powerful rhetoric that determines his [American administration's] and the Other's identity. He starts with linking democracy abroad to peace at home – framing the US in a relative position to establish that the peace within the country is ultimately linked to the world at large. The narrative build around 9/11 is full of symbolism – he talks of "clouds of fire and metal and ash", contrasts those with "sun filled morning" – these metaphors are not mere figures of speech, but they fundamentally establish the nature of self and Other – one linked to goodness and light and the other to evil and darkness. These descriptions are preceded by a careful selection of the verbs – the President talks of being 'shaken out of complacency' and of thousands 'being taken', thus establishing the fact that the responsibility for this calamity lies completely on the Other. This binary construction is apparent throughout the President's speech. In another part of the speech he describes the action against Bin Laden in Pakistan saying

> Our operation in Pakistan against Osama bin Laden cannot be the norm. The risks in that case were immense. The likelihood of capture, although that was our preference, was remote given the certainty that our folks would confront resistance. The fact that we did not find ourselves confronted with civilian casualties, or embroiled in an extended firefight, was a testament to the meticulous planning and professionalism of our Special Forces, but it also depended on some luck.

Only after this description does he make his first mention of drone strikes. He says:

> As was true in previous armed conflicts, this new technology [drones] raises profound questions -- about who is targeted, and why; about civilian casualties, and the risk of creating new enemies; about the legality of such strikes under U.S. and international law; about accountability and morality. So let me address these questions. To begin with, our actions are effective. Other communications from al Qaeda operatives confirm this as well. Dozens of highly skilled al Qaeda commanders, trainers, bomb makers and operatives have been taken off the battlefield. Plots have been disrupted that would have targeted international aviation, U.S. transit systems, European cities and our troops in Afghanistan. Simply put, these strikes have saved lives. Moreover, America's actions are legal. We were attacked on 9/11. Within a week, Congress overwhelmingly authorized the use of force. Under domestic law, and international law, the United States is at war with al Qaeda, the Taliban, and their associated forces. We are at war with an organization that right now would kill as many Americans as they could if we did not stop them first. So this is a just war -- a war waged proportionally, in last resort, and in self-defense.

Linguistically, this text is powerful – it works to build the threat and to justify the reaction. But more importantly perhaps, this text evokes discourses of legality, just war, security and of morality to build an interdiscursive narrative that lays the ideological foundations for the justification of targeted lethal attacks on a foreign soil. There is a discursive power in the written [or spoken] word that can be employed to "persuade audiences about important public issues" (Huckin, Andrus, & Clary-Lemon, 2012, 110). In this text, we see that persuasion at work. The war is just, because America was attacked first. The tactics are legal because Congress allowed the use of force. The drones are effective because they save lives. Or so says the President.

The text is effective because it utilizes various discursive techniques to make a strong point. The 'profound' nature of the question regarding the use of drones establishes that he is not taking the matter lightly. He attempts discursive mitigation, by linking the drone warfare to 'previous armed conflicts', expanding the debate from drones, to every war technology that has come under question. At the same time, he continues to build the binaries. He talks of Bin Laden, symbolically linking all drone targets to the world's most feared terrorist. While the Other is constructed in a frame of global terrorism, the frames constructed for the drone strategy itself are very different – the ambiguity surrounding the legal status of drone warfare is ignored, missing from the narrative – instead, he refers to the International law in terms of war with al Qaeda, strategically bringing in that point within texts dealing with drone strikes.

And then there is the discourse of morality. Chouliaraki (2004, 186) stresses that there is a tendency to moralize politics in the media or "the contemporary reformulation and reconstitution of political rationalities and practices in discourses of ethics" (qtd. in Mellor, 2009). By using phrases like "an organization that right now would kill as many Americans[6] as they could", the President seems to be reconstituting new political rationalities – it is 'just' to kill without due process cause otherwise we might be targeted. Paltridge held that CDA has a unique strength of 'unmasking concealed values and strategies' (qtd. in Wang, 2013, 12). Looking at the President's speech, it is difficult to miss the concealed meanings behind the United States' self-proclaimed status as the defender of good – it is hard to miss the underlying assumptions and assertions of power. For even though no physical power is used or abused, the text itself has become an embodiment of *symbolic power*. Taking of political discourses, Dijk describes a hegemonic class, a "*political elite* who are privileged to make decisions and manage others' minds" (qtd. in Wang, 2013, 14). Here we can see that *political elite* in action: the President of the United States reaffirming an extremely contested policy through a discourse of self-righteousness, morality and self-defense.

For this case study (see Table 4), one news piece from both the newspapers that was published before the speech has been selected so as to understand how the media was looking at the impending new counter terrorism policy and what questions were being raised. Another selected article from the Washington Post appeared a year after the speech, and has been analyzed to see how and whether the discourse has developed and transformed over one year. One article representing the policy position of each paper (an Editorial from New York Times and a News Analysis by Washington Post's National Security correspondents) has been included to highlight the discourse that the papers own.

Table 4 - Policy and media texts selected for analysis of Case III

CASE THREE	**COUNTER TERRORISM SPEECH AT NDU - 23RD MAY 2013**
New York Times	Obama in a Shift, to Limit Targeted Drone Strikes
New York Times	The End of the Perpetual War
New York Times	In Terror Shift, Obama Took a Long Path
New York Times	Delays in Effort to Refocus C.I.A. From Drone War

[6] In terms of linking morality to suffering or possible suffering, Shouman (2005) analyzed "visual elements in three pan-Arab newspapers, namely Al Ahram, Al Sharq Al Awsat and Al Hayat. He argues that most of the photos triggered sympathy for the Iraqi civilians and yet the majority of the photos were not accurate, in as much as they ignored several significant aspects of the war, for example, the depiction of Iraqi forces or Iraqi detainees" (qtd. in Mellor). The silence over the plight of civilian victims of drones here also seems to be a similar practice.

Washington Post	Obama Speech to Address Counter Terrorism Measures
Washington Post	Obama: U.S. at 'crossroads' in fight against terrorism
Washington Post	Analysis: Obama expresses regrets but seeks to retain anti-terror powers
Washington Post	Obama's revamp of anti-terror policies stalls

Even though a total of eight news articles on the speech were analyzed for this research, all of them seemed to be parroting a very similar set of issues – the issue of transparency, the issue of a lack of congressional oversight in the selection of drone targets, the issue of extended surveillance and rarely the issue of relations and role of military and intelligence relations – as these issues are raised, another set of issues is simultaneously silenced or at best, mentioned in passing. For example the pre-speech article in Washington Times mentions that

> …concerning many human rights and civil liberties groups has been Obama's significant expansion of the drone program, including the first killing of a U.S. citizen with an unmanned aircraft without charge or trial (Wilson, 2013).

However, this assertion is followed by recounting the threat of al Qaeda from post 2013 Afghanistan and mentions the importance of this strategy as troops pull back. What it comes back to is the fact that "the program is rarely acknowledged publicly by the administration" (Wilson, 2013), thus raising the question of transparency again. However, in some cases, the media does appear suspicious of the President's stated intentions regarding the revamping of the drone strategy. Wilson, analyzing the speech in Washington Post writes:

> The speech was a mix of defensiveness and contrition over the choices he has made — all of which, he argued, have been preferable to the alternatives. That includes the expansion of drone strikes well beyond America's defined battlefields. He made the case that the program, which has killed four American citizens abroad, puts at risk far fewer civilians than more-direct military intervention (Wilson, Obama expresses regrets but seeks to retain anti-terror powers, 2013).

His description of the speech as 'mix of defensiveness contrition over the choices' and the title of his piece (Obama expresses regrets but seeks to retain anti-terror powers), are tools of bringing into question the sincerity of the regret expressed by the President. It is interesting to note that this, or any other article, does not challenge the fact that drone strikes and military interventions have constantly been presented as the only two viable options to counter terrorism. Remembering Entman's definition of framing as the "selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problems definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation"

(1993, 52), the analysis of media texts makes the power of such frames obvious. The drone strategy is moralized and justified within a reality frame that does not question the two options (or lethal attacks vs boots on foreign ground) presented by the administration. The media questions the official discourse, but stays well within the frame defined by political elite – grudgingly, but surely, the media still seems to adhere loosely to the war on terror frame[7].

In an editorial titled "The end of the perpetual war", the New York Times points out that despite Obama's stated conviction to review Authorization for Use of Military Force he "did not say what should replace that law" (New York Times Editorial, 2013). Even though the article talks of the President's admission of lethal attacks killing four American citizens including Awlaki's 16 year old son, the overall tone is appreciative of the announced shifts in the counter terrorism policy. The article ends with "There have been times when we wished we could hear the right words from Mr. Obama on issues like these, and times we heard the words but wondered about his commitment. This was not either of those moments" (New York Times Editorial, 2013), thus establishing that the paper (as this is an editorial) essentially approves of and stands by the commitments the paper has made. As has been noticed in other press articles, this doesn't mention civilian casualties either and makes no attempt to construct an identity for the Other. The Washington Post, in an article penned by a regular National Security reporter, Greg Miller, remains slightly more critical, challenging the President's claim of clean, accurate targeting with "his assertions about the drone program's accuracy may have been undercut by the administration's disclosure on Wednesday that four U.S. citizens have been killed in strikes over the past four years – and that only one of those, the U.S.-born cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, was specifically targeted" (Miller & DeYoung, 2013). Once again, civilian casualties (albeit only American ones) are mentioned but no attributes are given to construct an identity for these civilians.

While civilians abroad may not be prioritized within the American news agenda, the question of the President's power and CIA's role remains relevant and is often raised. The New York Times, in the story acting as the build-up for the speech includes a quote from Zeke Johnson of Amnesty International, that says:

[7] The singularity of the war on terror frame is not being asserted here. As recent researches have shown, the frame has been challenged by the American media and various aspects of it questioned. This statement is simply reflective of the fact that the eight articles analyzed within this study remained well within the frame even when challenging the official narrative.

> The Obama administration continues to claim authority to kill virtually anyone anywhere in the world under the 'global battlefield' legal theory and a radical redefinition of the concept of imminence, President Obama should reject these concepts in his speech tomorrow and commit to upholding human rights, not just in word but in deed
> (Savage and Barker, 2013).

At a discursive level, this quote is extremely strong – it simultaneously evokes and rejects the "global battlefield" theory [8] (see Greenwald, 2013) and comments on the President's hegemonic exercise of power by criticizing his claimed "authority to kill virtually anyone anywhere in the world". Another article in the Washington Post holds that:

> Ultimately the President would decide to write a new playbook that would scale back the use of drones, target only those who really threatened the United States, eventually get the C.I.A. out of the targeted killing business and, more generally, begin moving the United States past the "perpetual war" it had waged since Sept. 11, 2001 (Barker, 2013).

On the surface, this quote raises a critical eye at the current counter terrorism operations by CIA (calling it a "targeted killing business") but at the same time the use of 'would' instead of 'should' makes it a statement of support for the direction that the President is taking.

Case II – Findings at a glance
President Obama's policy speech at NDU

On Drone Warfare

- President Obama presents drone strikes as the 'lesser evil' comparing it against military invasions.
- The President acknowledges civilian deaths in drone strikes, but terms them hard decisions.
- The press remains concerned about the lack of transparency around drone strikes.

On construction of the Other

- The President has used various metaphors, examples and historical references to establish the evilness of the Other.
- The press remains largely unconcerned with this construction, only quoting directly from the administration's quotes.

[8] The Global Battlefield Theory is linked to former American President George W. Bush and his vice President Dick Cheney. This theory, coined by the Bush administration at the beginning of the global war on terror, holds that the "battlefield is no longer confined to identifiable geographical areas, but instead, the entire globe is now one big, unlimited 'battlefield'" (Greenwald, 2013).

Justifications of drone strikes

- The President has used the continuing and 'imminent threat' to the United States as his main justification.
- The other justification is a comparison against military offensives.
- The media does not challenge the justifications offered in the policy speech.
- The points of contention in the media are
    - The lack of public information about these strikes;
    - The lack of Congressional oversight;
    - The continued role of CIA in counter terrorism operations.

Contextual placement

- President Obama's speech remains fixed within the war against terrorism frame.
- The media has used legal and constitutional discourse to question the President's sole authority.
- In some of the articles a human rights and civil liberties frame has been used.

DISCUSSION

Entman says that frames "*define problems* - determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits … *diagnose causes* - identify the forces creating the problem; *make moral judgments* - evaluate casual agents and their effects and *suggest remedies"* (1993, 52). Looking back at the two speeches given by President Obama, we can see a clear manifestation of such framing. The defined problem is terrorism - it is from the outside but can be ingrown, and is clearly linked to Islamic militants - the cause is defined as an ideology of hatred and pure evil, note that the cause in the President's narrative makes no mention of the causes stated by al Qaeda (a fight against Western economic and cultural hegemony). The moral judgments are clear – the Others are defined as darkness, the Americans as light, they terrorise even their own, and the US administration is on a mission to build a prosperous world and finally the remedies are offered - drone strikes and physical invasions.

Van Gorp (2007, 64), a proponent of framing theory, states that "framing devices are the various manifestations of a frame in a text, including arguments, metaphors, or descriptions of actors or issues. It is through framing devices that frames are identified as 'all conceivable framing devices that point at the same core idea constitut[ing] the manifest part of a frame package" (qtd. in Golcevski, Engelhardt, & Boomgaarden, 2013). The President's speech writers seem to be well aware of these framing devices. Metaphors of light and darkness, of ashes and dust of a power rising and death descending are all sprinkled within the analysed

policy texts. The arguments presented are based within the Global Battlefield theory and thus predetermine the direction that arguments would take. The description of the evil terrorists as harbingers of doom and destruction against whole America is united with its (Muslim) allies and notion of a heavy hearted President forced to make calls so tough that he will be haunted for life – all constitute to strengthen the frame of a just war being raged against evil forces.

At this point in the discussion I will turn back to the objectives of this research and the particular research questions I set out to answer.

The withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan has brought drones into special focus. President Obama, in his policy speech at NDU, admitted as much. Pakistan, which does not only share a border with the highly unstable Afghanistan but is also the target of the highest number of drone strikes, sees this as a cause of concern. Not only does the country stand to face a potential increase in terrorist insurgency from across the border, it will also potentially face an increased threat from the drones as they become the preferred war tactic in the region. While objections and protests against the drone strikes are common, there are many who off record, and in hushed tones, do accept them as a tactical necessity. As a media professional, I have encountered both streams of discourse – the one presented by those who stage violent protests against American hegemony and the one presented by those who have come to see drone strikes as a surgical necessity against terrorism outfits. It was in this context, that I came to be interested in the discourse surrounding the drones within the United States.

The American media, as a fundamental instrument of democracy, has played a vital role in building and sustaining the dominant discourse around the WOT. As this war shifts its direction, it is important to see whether the non-Americans affected by the war are getting any voice in the press that ultimately builds the narrative power base to strengthen the decisions of the political elite. Thus, I have explored questions of framing, justifications of war, construction of the other and media's response to these narratives. Laclau (1988, 254) holds that "all social phenomena and objects obtain their meaning(s) through discourse, which is defined as 'a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed'"(qtd. in Carpentier, 2007, 2). I looked at the selected media texts with to find a sense of such negotiations that challenge the officially constructed 'meaning' accorded to the drone warfare – however, despite an increasing impatience over the administration's continued secrecy, the media texts at large do not appear to include many voices of dissent.

The first research question deals with the framing of drones in public policy speeches by the Obama administration. I have analyzed two key speeches by the President himself. In the first speech – delivered after the first targeted drone killing of an American citizen – the president did not even mention the words drone, targeted or attacked. He simply announced in a passive voice that Anwar Awlaki has been killed. His omission of the method of his killing speaks volumes. This killing marked a definite turn in Obama's drone policy and his attempted secrecy was reflective of what the media termed a lack of transparency within the drone program. However, in the second speech, defining the future of drone policy, President Obama placed drones within the evolving frame of the WOT. And within the terrorism frame, he established the characteristics of the Other. This Other, the terrorist, was established as a force of evil involved in indiscriminate killing. This construction was aided by the use of binary constructions – the creation of a black and white world. Laclau & Mouffe (1985) hold that "discourses on the Enemy are based on a series of binary oppositions, such as good/evil, just/unjust, guilty/innocent, rational/irrational and civilized/uncivilized, which can be defined as floating signifiers"(qtd. in Carpentier, 2007, p. 1). Such signifiers are apparent in the President's speeches. Awlaki is linked with a 'murderous agenda', while the United States tries to bring 'peace, prosperity and security'.

The meanings of these signifiers remain fluid (for example, before 9/11 the level of surveillance that exists currently would not be seen as reflective of either peace or security). In his counter terrorism policy speech, Obama links the Americans to sacrifice – "over a trillion dollars on war", "suffering of service members and their families", many "have left a part of themselves on the battlefield, or brought the shadows of battle back home"; while the Other, the enemy, has been essentialized simply as an undefeatable "evil that lies in the hearts of some human beings". Mouffe (1997) holds that "when a nation or a people goes to war, powerful mechanisms come into play, in order to turn an adversary into the enemy. Where the existence of an adversary is considered legitimate and the right to defend their - distinct - ideas is not questioned, an enemy is excluded from the political community and has to be destroyed" (qtd. in Carpentier, 2007, 1). The policy discourse within the President's speeches is an example of a dehumanized enemy deserving only of death.

These are the dichotomies that have been operationalized to create the hegemonic ideology, within which drones are deemed necessary. So, President Obama repeatedly frames them as an all-important element of wider counter terrorism strategy and raises the benefits of the ability to kill targets in difficult locations without putting anyone at risk. Yet, there are people at risk – the civilian and unintended victims of the drone strikes. Here we come to the third

part of our first research question - the framing of the civilian victims. Stanford University's detailed research 'Living Under the Drones' starts with the following quote:

> In the United States, the dominant narrative about the use of drones in Pakistan is of a surgically precise and effective tool that makes the US safer by enabling "targeted killing" of terrorists, with minimal downsides or collateral impacts. This narrative is false… while civilian casualties are rarely acknowledged by the US government, there is significant evidence that US drone strikes have injured and killed civilians.
> (HRCR, & GJC, 2012, p. v).

In a detailed report on the civilian impact of drones, Columbia University researchers have listed deaths and injuries, retaliation against and stigma attached to victims, an increase in violence and instability, an increasing psychological toll, poverty, loss of property and a prevailing sense of injustice among other negative impacts. The civilian deaths have also been mentioned in UNSR Ben Emmerson's report on drone warfare. Despite these raised voices, the civilians in President Obama's policy discourse remain faceless. They are mentioned – multiple times – but only as burdens on the President's heart, which will haunt him all his life.

Finally, with regards to the justifications of war within the political rhetoric – the main and salient justification is simply constructed within the dichotomic presentation of forces of good versus forces of evil. Entman (1993, 55) says that "frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements". In the discourse being analyzed, we can see the creation of a frame that is constructed on the premise of unipolar hegemony: The United States is the hegemon, whose security needs are superior to the others. Therefore, the frame obscures the realities of civilian deaths in targeted communities and focuses instead on what it would mean for the US if these 'tough decisions' were not taken. In President Obama's policy speech there are multiple references to allies and alliances that help frame the US in the centre of an amiable global community. But as Gilpin (1981) states "the ruling elites and coalitions of subordinate states frequently form alliances with the dominant powers and identify their values and interests with those of the dominant powers" (qtd. in Beyer 2013, 34). In a research study on hegemony and war, the author writes that "There is no doubt at all that hegemony uses war to extend and expand its power. The quest for hegemony is a cause of much of the violence and war we are witnessing today" (Muzaffar, 2006). I'm not asserting that the WOT is purely for the benefit of a hegemonic power. However, for voices of dissent, from countries like Pakistan, where the civilian victims of drone strikes dwell,

America's hegemonic power struggle forms the basis of the frame within which the drone strikes are viewed.

Analysis of the media discourse shows that the media have largely reported the policy speeches in their intended vein. The questions raised in the media have more to do with the transparency and the power accorded to the President and nothing to do with the global impact of the drone strategy. The press constructs the other in the same manner as the President, but simply adds a discursive distance by the use of quotation marks which "make it clear that [these expressions] belong to someone else" and serve to dissociate the writer (Fairclough, 2001, 74). The contextual frames used mostly are the same as the administration with the addition of a frame of civil liberties and constitutional rights of American citizens that seem to have been added only after the Awlaki episode.

Even though the singular frame of war on terror is now seen as broken, the articles, even when critical, do adhere to some of the basic ideological assumptions embedded within the war on terror frame. But perhaps, the media is not to blame. We have to remember that "wars, revolutions, the creation of new political entities, and political discourse via the media are all highly dependent on material resources, and all are realized via agency" (Beyer, 2012). The media, in absence of hard facts and devoid of resources available to the political elite might be struggling to formulate an alternative discourse surrounding the drone warfare. Stuart Hall said that discourse is a "way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (1997). The discourse surrounding the drones is inevitably tethered to the incidents of 9/11, whose repercussions are still being suffered by the whole world. Perhaps, the media simply needs more time to develop a separate discourse that is not closely chained to the ideological underpinnings that took root in the post 9/11 global battleground.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to highlight the salient features in American policy and media discourse. The findings show that there is a growing discomfort within the media regarding the veil of secrecy that covers the selection and assassination of drone victims. However, both the administration and the press seem united in their belief that the use of drones for lethal attacks on foreign soil is important, moral and justified. The discourse around the drone warfare is completely embedded within a larger military and security discourse. The administration and the media rarely comment upon the failure of diplomatic and political

solutions to counter cross-border terrorism. There is a lack of alternate voices in the media. The silences surrounding the civilian victims of drones, the legal status of conducting lethal attacks in foreign country, the exact number and identities of all the previous targets and other such questions are in themselves a testament to the ambiguous nature of the discourse that has been built to accord moral and legal justification to these strikes.

This research has been very limited in scope and scale but does highlight a need for further research on a variety of related topics. Particularly it raises questions about the mediation of the American drone policy in a broader and more representative sample of American media. Similar research can also be carried out to see how alternate media like security and specialized blogs and media of targeted countries mediate policy statements on American drone policy.

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