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Drone Wars: Transforming Conflict, Law, And Policy



Synopsis

Drones are the iconic military technology of many of today's most pressing conflicts, a lens through which U.S. foreign policy is understood, and a means for discussing key issues regarding the laws of war and the changing nature of global politics. Drones have captured the public imagination, partly because they project lethal force in a manner that challenges accepted rules, norms, and moral understandings. *Drone Wars* presents a series of essays by legal scholars, journalists, government officials, military analysts, social scientists, and foreign policy experts. It addresses drones' impact on the ground, how their use adheres to and challenges the laws of war, their relationship to complex policy challenges, and the ways they help us understand the future of war. The book is a diverse and comprehensive interdisciplinary perspective on drones that covers important debates on targeted killing and civilian casualties, presents key data on drone deployment, and offers new ideas on their historical development, significance, and impact on law and policy. *Drone Wars* documents the current state of the field at an important moment in history when new military technologies are transforming how war is practiced by the United States and, increasingly, by other states and by non-state actors around the world.

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Customer Reviews

"An essential anthology delving into the raging debate over the use of drones in the endless war on terror, covering all the angles - political, legal, moral, military - with impressive scope and judicious balance." Fred Kaplan, author of *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*"No other advancement in military technology in recent years has provoked as

many legal challenges and caused as much political furor as the advent of drone warfare. In this first of its kind book leading experts debate what drones have meant to fight against terrorism, America's moral authority and the stability of its relations with the Muslim world. Intelligent and incisive, this book is a must-read for academics and policy makers alike, as well as anyone interested in America's military and foreign policies." Vali Nasr, Dean of The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University and author of *Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat*"This is the best volume I have read on the nature of post-9/11 warfare. It is likely to become the standard book on "the decade of the drone"." Tom Ricks, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author of *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*"Drone Wars could not be more timely or more valuable. At a time when technology and strategy are transforming the means of warfare and possibly even the ends of war itself, a wide range of knowledgeable authors, many with direct experience of drone warfare, examine the implications of remotely piloted weapons from military, legal, political, ethical and cultural perspectives. That this volume raises more questions than it answers, at this moment in history, is precisely as it should be." Anne-Marie Slaughter, President and CEO of New America and former Dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University"... Drone Wars is an extensive anthology on the current debates surrounding the use of armed aerial drones in contemporary conflicts. The editors compiled a list of twenty-two essays and divided them into four major topic areas: drones on the ground, drones and the law of war, drones and policy, and drones and the future of war. Each topic area provides an in-depth view of the political, ethical, legal, and moral arguments surrounding the employment of armed drones. Contributing authors provide a wide array of opinions and observations detailing both the pros and cons of drone warfare. Many of the authors are subject matter experts in the fields of international law, policy, and strategy development. Others come from academia, media, government, and various think tanks from around the country. This impressive list helps to make the book an authoritative source on drone warfare." Lt Col Andrew P. Creel, *Military Review*"Drone Wars offers many new insights and approaches that are much needed in the drone debate. The book's essay structure makes it particularly suited for teaching, also because there is quite some disagreement between the authors on several questions, such as whether drones are revolutionary, whether the US strikes are legal, or what the future of drone operations will look like." Ulrike Esther Franke, *Parameters*"Drone Wars is a rich collection that offers the latest in the growing scholarship on drone warfare ... This is a timely book, impressive in its breadth, with a notable collection of authors who range from former high-ranking US government officials and public policy specialists to academics and experts in international law. This book will appeal to those looking for a

volume that addresses some of the major debates surrounding drone warfare ..." Jesse Kirkpatrick, *Defense and Security Analysis* "... provides a thorough overview of the contemporary debate around drones. Although it is largely about targeted killings, this volume is admirably balanced and organized, containing both "pro-drone" and "anti-drone" arguments side by side, and includes a range of distinguished contributors from both sides of the fence." Michael J. Boyle, *International Affairs*

Drone Wars presents a series of essays that is a diverse and comprehensive interdisciplinary perspective on drones. It covers important debates on targeted killing and civilian casualties, presents key data on drone deployment, and offers new ideas on their historical development, significance, and impact on law and policy.

Drone Wars is a rich collection that offers the latest in the growing scholarship on drone warfare. The book casts a wide net in terms of subject matter. One wonders how, even with the obvious interrelationship between its sections, the editors can keep the volume from reading like a piecemeal collection. But the book benefits from a shrewd organizational choice – each of the book's four sections begins with brief personal narrative accounts – and these help the book to hang together well. These first-person descriptions of drone warfare range from the perspective of civilians on the ground to the experience of drone operators themselves. Journalist David Rohde authors the book's leading chapter, where he gives an account of his time as an imprisoned abductee under the control of the Taliban in the Tribal Regions of Pakistan; parts two and three of the book begin with stories from drone operators, and a particularly compelling chapter offers a glimpse of drones' impact on a shopkeeper's life in North Waziristan, Pakistan. These views – "from the ground" – offer insightful glimpses inside the lives and minds of those who operate drones and those who feel the effects of their operation. While similar (and more detailed and in-depth) accounts of such experiences exist in the popular press and in the reports of NGOs and international organizations, the inclusion of these accounts is refreshing; too often academic discussions of drones can tend to be abstract and distant – the editors did well by reminding the reader of the human face that is impacted by drone use, drone policy, and the relationship between drones and international law. Moreover, part one of the book, "Drones on the Ground," is one of the best collections of articles detailing the impacts that drones have on noncombatants. Drawing from the *New America*

Foundation's (NAF) data set of drone strikes, Bergen and Rowland's chapter, "Decade of the Drone: Analyzing CIA Drone Attacks, Casualties, and Policy," offers a detailed look at the "numbers." But despite the good work that organizations like the NAF have done in compiling statistics such as the number of civilian casualties and the targeted killing of militants, the authors' conclusion that "what is needed is greater openness and transparency" is a stark reminder of just how nontransparent the US's drone program remains (31). This is a timely book, impressive in its breadth, with a notable collection of authors who range from former high-ranking US government officials and public policy specialists to academics and experts in international law. This book will appeal to those looking for a volume that addresses some of the major debates surrounding drone warfare as it is being carried out presently.

This is a very weak anthology of essays, most by American journalists. For the most part, it is an extended rehash of work by the New America Foundation. Of several studies of drone warfare (especially Stanford/NYU's and The Bureau of Investigative Journalism's), the New America Foundation's is by far the most friendly to the US. Co-editor Peter Bergen and contributor Jennifer Rowland co-author an atrociously bad essay that might as well have been written by the Obama administration. David Rohde and Sarah Holewinski provide decent essays. Most of the material has been better explored in other books (e.g., by Scott Horton, Jane Mayer, Jeremy Scahill, and Andrew Cockburn) and in The New Yorker, The Guardian, and The Intercept. Scholars like Georgetown law professor David Cole and Andrew Bacevich, among others, have also examined the issue. There is a lot out there. The catch is you may have to do some work to find it. But this book doesn't do the work. There is absolutely nothing that merits publication by a major university press. There is no evidence at all of peer review. The book is riddled with significant omissions. For example, Bergen and Rowland show no awareness at all of major studies that preceded the book. That's an enormous issue when some of those studies directly undermine claims the authors make. In a similar vein, there is little awareness in evidence of the history of high-technology warfare, which precedes the war in Vietnam by decades. All in all, one of the worst books I've personally seen come out of the Cambridge University Press. Two stars instead of one only because there are a few essays that are worth reading.

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