**The immorality of remote warfare**

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The US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001/02 greatly relied on the strategic bombing of the Tora Bora mountains, thought to be the hideout for OBL, and subsequently put even greater dependence on drone strikes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and other parts of the world under the unrelenting US blitz for mostly false pretexts.

The point under discussion here is to highlight not only the immorality of remote warfare that causes hard-to-hide civilian casualties in the thousands, but also the snowballing pusillanimity shrouded in high-tech military gadgets, advanced weaponry and addiction to the use of strategic bombers, satellites and armed drones taking on uncertain targets with questionable accuracy, while sitting thousands of kilometres away. A US Army Lieutenant Colonel, Paul Lushenko, and Sarah Kreps have recently analysed the pitfalls of the use of drones with a particular focus on Pakistan in a paper titled, “A More Just Drone War Is Within Reach”: ‘The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 brought an end to a 20-year war. But as a series of recent investigations by The New York Times has underscored, and also marked the beginning of postmortems about what the United States did right and, in some cases, did wrong. Drawing on Pentagon documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, the Times revealed that US drone strikes killed an alarming number of civilians in Afghanistan—likely hundreds more than the 188 the Defence Department has acknowledged killing in such strikes since 2018—a pattern that appears to be consistent with US operations in Iraq and Syria. Targeting decisions were sometimes marred by confirmation bias: Pentagon analysts saw what they expected to see, often identifying civilians rushing to help those hit by US strikes as terrorists and striking them, as well. This reporting is an important first step toward accounting for the shortcomings of the drone war that Washington launched after 9/11, one that President Joe Biden’s administration should build on as it concludes its own review of drone strikes outside conventional—or declared—war zones’.

[Pakistan condemns hijab ban on Muslim students in Indian state of Karnataka](https://nation.com.pk/09-Feb-2022/pakistan-condemns-hijab-ban-on-muslim-students-in-indian-state-of-karnataka)

Without any clear views on the moral and soldierly side of the issue, the said paper underscores that no accounting of the drone war would be complete without determining whether policies intended to reduce civilian casualties from US strikes ever worked. To answer that question, they studied strike data from Pakistan, where the Pentagon and the CIA reportedly conducted nearly 400 strikes in the ten-year period before President Barack Obama’s administration tightened its targeting requirements. The surge in civilian casualties, which amounted to three civilian deaths per strike in 2009, also drew criticism from the United Nations and from watchdog groups such as Amnesty International. It was against this backdrop that Obama adopted a set of more stringent requirements for US strikes in undeclared theatres, including Pakistan. Subsequently, in 2013, the US administration officially shifted its standard from “reasonable certainty” of zero civilian casualties to “near certainty.” The policy change dramatically reduced civilian casualties in Pakistan without giving perceived terrorists an appreciable advantage, suggesting that similarly stringent targeting standards might save innocent lives in theatres such as Iraq and Syria, too. According to the non-profit Bureau of Investigative Journalism, which collects data from news reports, official statements, press releases, and other documents, US drone strikes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen from 2002 to 2020 killed between 10,000 and 17,000 people. Between 800 and 1,750 of the dead are thought to have been civilians, the highest percentage of them in Pakistan.

[FM Qureshi, Sheikh Abdullah agree to further enhance bilateral cooperation](https://nation.com.pk/09-Feb-2022/fm-qureshi-sheikh-abdullah-agree-to-further-enhance-bilateral-cooperation)

Beginning in 2011, consequent to Pakistan’s strong protest and stiffness in bilateral relations, strikes in Pakistan began to be conditioned on near certainty of no collateral damage under Obama’s instructions. As a result, civilian casualties from US strikes in Pakistan markedly decreased.

The American experts conclude that reducing civilian deaths from US drone strikes doesn’t have to come at the cost of effective counterterrorism. A tighter threshold for US drone strikes can reduce civilian casualties without emboldening the enemy. That proves US’ continued obsession with debauched remote warfare and the killing of innocent civilians termed collateral damage reduced under stricter scrutiny.

The issue of use of armed drones in non-war zones resulting in a lot of civilian casualties needs to be raised by all national and international think tanks, print, electronic and social media, by all human-rights organisations, and by the diplomatic channels at UNO and other multilateral diplomatic forums. The psychologists and psychiatrists treating thousands of American and allies’ combat soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a backlash of depraved use of remote and excessive military high-tech muscles, may also make their respective governments and societies more cognisant of millions of civilians suffering from PTSD, besides thousands being maimed forever. Let some humanity prevail in the self-created US’ war theatres and let not the UN become a defunct League of Nations and let the blue berets be deployed on the principle of saving humanity, rather than mere Western interests.