



The United States Covert War in Pakistan: Drone Strikes an Infringement on National Sovereignty

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Received: September 1, 2014

Accepted: November 13, 2014

ABSTRACT

Pakistan is under the United States predator war in the shape of drone strikes which is infringement of sovereignty. The US deemed the weapon as most effective in her war against terror which are ultimately shackles to militants in the areas where writ of the state is nowhere. The situation has remained so murky throughout the usage of drone strikes, whereby one school of thought claim the tacit approval of these strikes by Pakistani governments while the other school is opposite to the same very claim. The US is headstrong about drone war for which the foot prints of Joint Special Operation Command (JSOC) has been strengthened in various countries to outsource the policy by monopoly of power politics.

KEYWORDS: Drone, sovereignty, militants, weapon, covert.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cold war era had given birth to nuclear warfare but war on terror has its own weapons in the shape of drones and this technology has been with escalated boom and competition. The US security advisors have endorsed lethal drone technology which at this time is beyond the capacity of other countries. At least 76 countries have acquired UAV technology, including Pakistan, India Russia and China. (Stanford Law School, p. 141). Drones are carried out and defended by the US on the following grounds; firstly, drones strikes have efficiently killed militants and still continued with minimal casualties to civilian. Secondly, drones have killed so many high commands of Al-Qaeda and its associates. Thirdly, drones have discouraged and strained the militants organization and made them incapable to attack on coalition forces. Fourthly, Drones are effective than occupational military forces and are less expensive. (The Royal Institute, 2013)

There are two different ways of drones operation, one is by CIA which is covert and is operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The other is by department of defense and is operated in Yemen and Somalia by military forces which are legally bound to international law and the US military law, so these are under legal coverage. Targets are located in many ways, one is by government and simultaneously 'kill list' are handed to the US which result in signature strikes consequently. (The Bloomberg Business, 2013)

The US used 9/11 as pretext for war on terror. The US ensured not only physical occupation but also initiated covert activities. Bush government in 2004 was empowered by Pentagon and defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld to launch twelve covert strikes in Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Persian Gulf states where Al-Qaeda and their associates were suspected to be active. (Sarwar, 2009)

The specter of US drones strikes run by CIA has been stretched to Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan and Yemen. The campaigns in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia are run by the CIA, with little congressional oversight, and their existence has even been denied by the Obama administration in the courts. (Melbar, 2012)

Bush administration has validated their covert activities specially drones strikes under article 51 of UN charter which has granted right of self-defense to nation. As article 51 says,

“Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member state of the UN, until the security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security”.

This article can be applied as shield by all the states rather than by the US only, but the dilemma is that most of the UNSC provisions have been adopted and moulded by the great states and minor states are nearly exempted from this privilege. In the garb of self-defense the aggression has been inflicted on the states, whose main concern is how to survive without any consideration for power maximization.

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2. Drones attacks in Pakistan territory, number- casualties- effects- success vis-à-vis failure The United States government has started drones strikes (unmanned aerial vehicle) in Pakistan tribal areas in 2004 which led to a series of such strikes. The purpose behind these attacks was to kill high value targets of Taliban and Al-Qaeda, who have sanctuaries inside Pakistan. Generally the UAVs used are MQ-1 Predator and more recently MQ-9 Reaper firing AGM-114 Hellfire missiles. The drones have become a weapon of choice for the United States in the fight against al-Qaeda.

There remained difference in the strategies of both Bush and Obama as the former ordered for arms to curb terrorism and militancy while Obama has relied on covert activities, the most distinctive of which is drones strikes, known as unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). Obama's presidency led the drones enhanced to such an extent which are six times more than Bush both terms. He gave protection to CIA from congressional and judicial oversight. (According to data collected by the New America Foundation, the Obama administration launched 284 drone strikes between 2009 and September 2012. By comparison, the Bush administration launched 46 strikes between 2004 and 2008. (Counter terrorism, 2013)

New American Foundation have worked and collected data that in Pakistan there occurred 334 drone strikes in time period of June 2004 and October of 2012. (New American Foundation 2013) Out of these 228 strikes have been carried out in Obama time which means that there is tremendous increase in drones almost 86% during the timeline of January 2009 and October 2012 only in Pakistan, similar is the situation in Yemen and Somalia as well. During Bush administration only known personnel on 'kill list' were used to be targeted by drone but recently escalating 'signature strikes' have been order of the day where unidentified leery persons are hit by these strikes. (Amnesty International Report, 2013)

In recent years, the US has targeting Pakistan with military incursions and drone attacks in our tribal areas. This has had an alarmingly adverse impact on Pakistan's psyche which already is perturbed by America's continued indifference to its legitimate security concerns and sensitivities. (Ahmad, 2013). According to Brian Glyn Williams elaborated drones with consequences, he stated that people of tribal areas called these drones strikes with various names as *machays* (wasps) for their stings or *bangana* (thunder) for its strike at a sudden without any prior information. (Williams, p. 879) There is persistent mistrust in tribes due to drones as even neighbors doubted each other's that supposedly any one can be informant of US, Pakistani Government or of intelligence and can revenge enmities by drones. Drones have been perpetual source of anxiety and psychological trauma to the local people. They are scared that perhaps they would be targeted by the next drone strike supposedly preyed by mistaken information. (Amnesty International Report, 2013)

Furthermore, the children are greatly alarmed of drone planes and they rushed to their homes on every explosion or loud voice of planes, shelling, whereby they unconsciously hide themselves behind their parents. one father from Esso Khel told Amnesty International. (Ibid. p. 33)

Drone strikes have halted social life and resulted in mental suppression, said a resident of Esso Khel, People are unable to sleep at night by loud sounds of planes. They are scared about their lives. Shakeeb from Darai Nishtar told that even in mosques they remained on tenterhook due to thinking about imminent drone strikes. These strikes are most likely because they target gathering and are unable to distinguish locals from Taliban. (Ibid. p. 32)

Consequently drones have exacerbated the insurgency inside Pakistan, there is increase in Anti-American sentiments and doubts about government involvement in drones strikes. This is apparent from increase membership of TTP to 35,000 through amalgamation of various groups and by entry of new youth. (South Asia Terrorism Portal Profile) It is important to stress that not all of these new recruits are driven by drones, only an unknown percentage.) Armed groups in North Waziristan are engaged in Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) bombing, assault crowded places as marketplaces, mosques, schools in order to ensure maximum of death tolls. (The Hands of Cruelty, 2012) The Al-Qaeda and Taliban callously doomed death on persons suspected for espionage of the US and Pakistan by employing semi-judicial process devoid of transparent trial. (Ibid. pp. 31-34) The reality is that residents of Waziristan are critical of hosting Taliban and other armed non-state actors hence it has pruned them to drone strikes. They are compelled to shelter them for the fear of retaliation on Taliban's part. Mostly the females are apprehensive in this regard as have been manifested as follows; That hosting Taliban remained very risky to local family because henceforth they could be target along Taliban, explained Fauzia, a student from Edak. (Amnesty International Interview, 2013)

The local people are apprehensive of Taliban because their children could be trained as suicide bombers. The women are restricted to check their sons outside, so fear loomed large in their minds that might their children get preyed by Taliban. Fahmida, a mother living in Datta Khel, expressed her concerns about Taliban visiting their homes from which she forbade her male family members due to fear of drone strikes but they do

not consider female advises. (Ibid) .Fahmida expressed her concerns that in patriarchal society of their the women have no option other than to comply with male members of family. (Amnesty Report, 2013)

The US armed unmanned predator aircraft has enraged Pakistani civil society and has been remained of major concern. There is no doubt that this covert technology has successfully targeted some of high profile Taliban commanders also. It has been reported that three predators of this type has been operated inside Pakistan with then president Musharraf's consensus albeit there is official denial of this cooperation. (Washington Post, 2008) Former president of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf had confessed in one of his interview in 2013 about his consent for the US drone strikes inside Pakistan throughout his era. (Robertson and Botelho, 2013)

Currently in December 2011, the US military and intelligence personnel were allowed airbases in Baluchistan and Sindh provinces, which have been used to launch drones in the recent past. (International Crisis Group, 2013) Among the dead in the apparent Predator attack was Abu Laith al-Libi, a Libyan national said to be an Al Qaeda commander. In May, at least 14 people were reported killed in a dual missile strike on a house in Damadola, Bajaur. Prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani has termed it violation of Pakistan sovereignty. (Reuters, 2013) Most of these strikes has been targeted successfully and killed foreign militants residing in FATA different agencies especially in Waziristan. Drone strikes in FATA have caused anti-US criticism. (Usama and Julian, p. 119) From 2004-10 there were 120 assaults and out of these 107 targeted on north and south Waziristan. Senior officers in both US and Pakistan not named have claimed for covert undertaking regarding drones in 2008 in which approval has given. Islamabad sternly refuted these reports. (Ignatius, 2008) In 2009 these strikes were escalated. Graham Usher stated that these drones strikes has vanished any of favor from people which was wished by Obama due to financial help. (Usher, 2009)

Pakistani Government has always condemned these strikes as in May 2012 Foreign Ministry statement: "We strongly condemn these drones attacks. We regard them as a violation of our territorial integrity. They are in contravention of international law. They are illegal, counterproductive, and totally unacceptable." (Foreign Ministry Manuscript, 2012) Pakistan should shoot down drones because it is assault on national sovereignty. (Mohmand, 2013) Drones strikes are countering steps for peace process. (Sherpao, 2013)

President Zardari expressed reservation about drones due to their political strains as besides loss of lives, property it has doubted democratic government and undermined credibility of governance. (Glyn, p. 881)

If the costs and effects are considered then it is clear that it has not only killed militants but resulted in loss of civilian as well, therefore these are abominate to Pakistan civil society.

There arise so many questions that if Pakistan can block NATO supply line (GLOC) then why there is no retaliation in case of drones. The US has recently declared that they were never asked to stop drone attacks.

The US standpoint is that they can inform the Pakistani's governments with minute details of drone strikes but only after strikes have been carried out because pre hand information can alert the targets. Till now Pakistan's air force has not retaliated and never shot down drones which reflect the collaboration of Pakistan. Pakistan has permitted the US to launch drones from a base inside Pakistan, albeit there is no official approval. (Ibid. pp. 882-3)

Afghan president Hamid Karzai has logically stated that Islamabad had handed over militants list so that they may be ousted from Pakistan. He proceeded that drones have never targeted Haqqani or Afghan Taliban network. (Yusafzai, 2009) There seems some agreements behind the curtain. Some of retired intelligence personnel are with view that drones have been agreed both by Musharraf and Zardari. (Ghazanfar, 2013) If drone strikes are with mutual consent then it is not strategic challenge. Pakistan must keep own house in order in order to avoid drone strikes. (Amin, 2013)

According to US officials these strikes are effective. Defence secretary Leon Peneta has termed Drones strikes very effective weapon against dismantling Al-Qaeda. (CNN, 2009). Similarly Michael Hayden a former CIA Director, has stated that drones strikes has given a tough time to Al-Qaeda and its associates in FATA, where their sanctuaries has been destroyed to great extent. Both Bush and Obama's advisers for counterterrorism have approved and included drones at policy operational level. Former Bush counterterrorism adviser Juan Zarate stated that drones have broken Al-Qaeda's back by killing high command of it. John Brennan, the chief counterterrorism adviser to President Obama, emphasized on drones strikes because according to him these weapons are effective, ethical and exposed militants networks in those remote areas where the writ of state do not exist. (Brennen, 2012) Drones are technically very effective against terrorist hide outs. (Amin, 2013) Drone strikes have costs greatly to the militants because they cannot arrange gathering, planning and moreover they remain in perpetual fear. Drones strikes have killed the high commands as Baitullah Mehsud, Naik Muhammad, Waliullah, Tahir Yusufzai, Qari Zafar, Wali Muhammad

Tofan, Malvi Nazir, Badruddin Haqqani, Atiya Abdur Rehman, Mustafa Abul Yazeed, Abu Hamza, Abu Ubaida, Abulais Alibi, Abu Yahya Alibi, Badar Mansoor and recently Hakeemullah Mehsud. (Arfin Report, 2013) The death of Hakeemullah Mehsud happened on first November, 2013, at time when according to Pakistan interior ministry the delegation was ready to visit Waziristan in order to contract peace deal with TTP, albeit opposition parties and even TTP are with views that no such arrangements were taken. This has proved a critical juncture for Pakistan because couple of days ago, prime minister Nawaz Sharif visited the US where he was ensured about halting drone strikes. Consequently, TTP under new leader Fazlullah (who under TNSM has remained active in Swat turmoil in 2007 onwards) has claimed to revenge Pakistani state. What to say of tribal areas, even the settled areas of KPK has been targeted by drone strikes. The recent drone strike in Hangu, in a settled area is a tough challenge for state in general and for KPK provincial government in particular, where Pakistan Tehrik Insaf has been intended for closure of NATO supply line after the death of Hakeemullah Mehsud in drone strike.

There is some understanding between the two states on these strikes. Drones are being used against terrorists in the areas where Pakistan state writ is nonexistent per the responsible people present on ground most of the drone victims are terrorists. (Munir, 2013) North Waziristan is abode of foreigners who taken part in Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and then instead of going back stayed in Pakistan and Afghanistan. These non-state actors are a danger to Pakistani state. If we conduct an operation in North and expel all foreign militants there would be no more drone strikes. Drones have killed more than 80 AL Qaeda, Taliban, IMU leaders, have restricted their movements to a great extent, and have diluted AL-Qaeda abilities. (Ibid)

Drone strikes have been carried out by both presidents Musharraf and Zardari's consent. (Yusafzai, 2013) There are two school of thought, one says that drone strikes are carried with mutual consent albeit official denial existed, the second says that drones are not allowed by these two governments. (Pervez, 2013) In principle drones are illegal, where civilian casualties resulted from these come under extra-judicial killing, but by contemplating the activities of TTP and Al-Qaeda, where TTP has perpetrated Suicide blast in Afghanistan's Khost by killing CIA officers and the master mind of this assault was Hakeemullah Mehsud. The US as counter attack will also carried it strategy and most probably covert war in the garb of drone strikes is the only effective devise at their disposal. (Ibid)

To sum up, Drones strikes are violation of national sovereignty. It has diminished the effect of word sovereignty because every now and then Pakistan sovereignty and territorial integrity get assaulted by Drones strikes. Even the US concerned officials have acknowledged this fact. Munter and David Patraeus are both with conception that Obama reliance on drones in counter terrorism has resulted in adverse situation in Pakistan. Sometimes long term and more beneficial objectives get lost by short term gain. Patraeus has strained terms with CIA central command of counterterrorism due to his this standpoint. (Ignatius, 2012)

In a landmark judgment, the Peshawar High Court ruled in April 2013 that US drone strikes breach Pakistan's sovereignty and constitute an act of aggression "in clear violation of the UN Charter". (Peshawar High Court Order, Para 16 2013) Drone strikes are a "blatant violation of Basic Human Rights", international instruments and provisions of the Geneva Conventions, the Court stated. (Ibid, para 22) The ruling ordered the Pakistan government to take steps to prevent further drone strikes, including "by force or to shot [sic] down the intruding drones". (Ibid. para 17)

As Faisal Karim Kundi, former deputy speaker of the National Assembly, told International Crisis Group researchers in February 2013, that shooting down drone would trigger war from superpower. (International Crisis Group, 2013). Amnesty International report on drones inside Pakistan has concluded that the US usage of drones for targeted killing except in the cases of armed conflict is likely to bereft the basic right to life and is grave case of extrajudicial executions. (Op. Cit Amnesty International Report. P. 43) Even if international humanitarian law is not to applied than international human rights law's enforcement norms are capable to be applied on the US intentional lethal force usage. Moreover, extra armed conflict usage of lethal force demand justification from the US that this force has been used only when it become inevitable and proportionate at the costs of human lives, target was far from achievement by non-lethal incapacitation or capture. (Human Rights Report, Para. 32)

Illegal and intentional execution carried either on the orders of government officials or with their collusion and collaboration are extrajudicial killing, strictly condemned and is grave crime under international law. (Human Rights Committee, para 18). Furthermore, the circumstances other than armed conflicts cannot justify the drone strikes. For instance the intentional executions by drones in the cases as devoid to capture the leery perpetrator, pertinent warning, armed resistance and where the suspects are not imminent threat to security forces, then it is utter violation of international human rights law and is extrajudicial killing. (Ibid. Para 33)

The US drone strikes inside Pakistan is a matter of extraterritorial force as well. Perhaps the tacit approval is granted by Pakistan government but besides that the US is not exempted from provision of international humanitarian and international human rights law to be followed under the context. (Op. Cit Amnesty International Report). Blackwater existence inside Pakistan has infuriated Pakistan as blackwater has base in Karachi not only hitting and hunting high command of Al-Qaeda and Taliban but also operating unmanned vehicle (UV) assault in collaboration with joint special operations command (JSOC). This has ignited great hatred for foreign power, as Jeremy Schahill foremost expert on black water argued about black water (JSOC) teams operation inside Pakistan perhaps with Pakistan government's consent. Both Pakistan and US concealing and refuting it. (Scahill, 2009)

The theory of Defensive realism has been put forward by Kenneth Waltz, the primary goal of state according to which is the maximization of security. States maintain their position in the world. (Waltz, 1991, p. 126) Security can be achieved by many other ways rather than expansionist foreign policy, which is not devoid of bitter consequences. There are two easy ways for acquisition of security, firstly, defensive realist have firm conviction that "offense-defense" military and technological capabilities and balance in international system, this make states capable to defend own territory rather than to annex another territory. (Christensen and Synder, 1990)

Expansionist strategies and policies have always remained expensive. Secondly, there arise the problem that in expanding power, a dominant coalition can come to the forefront who will difficult to neutralize. So it is the best way to remained focused on balance of power. (Synder and Avera)

Consequently, states remained cautious about balance of powers in order to defend and balance against threatening state, therefore aspire for status-quo. States are engrossed with their power, position and above all the security and in pursuance of all these the prevalent competition and anarchy deter them from cooperation in common interests as well. Contradiction result when strategic interests coincide. (Siddall, 2000) The same is the situation of Pakistan and the US, where both are for own security and economic maximization. Pakistan is victim of Security Dilemma about its immediate neighbors India and Afghanistan, an imminent threat on both east and western borders respectively, while the US is seeking for expansionist foreign policy based on economic and security maximization, all these led to the regional instability.

For the sake of own expansionist agenda by the US through "offensive-defensive realism" it is going to upset the security of Pakistan. The theory also concede that while maximizing the security by one state will trigger insecurity for another state and the US is aware that its agenda has fall out for Pakistan. Defensive realists concede that contradictions are inevitable in case of incompatible differences in aspects of security and other interests between security seeking and aggressor states. (Jervis, 1990) Resultantly the relation of Pakistan and the US is one of roller coaster.

The comparative power status is main cause of policy and strategies application. The US being a super power is following the guidelines which are illustration of offensive realism while Pakistan in this whole background can just strive to adopt parameters to defend its security. Offensive realists hold that the link between systemic imperatives and the actual foreign policies states pursue is relatively direct. Power position and capabilities of states build up intentions accordingly, as in the case of the US there are direct rivalries with many more countries of the world because it is super power. It is not because of struggle for security by both states in international system that wars resulted but the aggression of one state. (Mearsheimer, 1990)

The US covert Drones strikes are based on their claim to disrupt the militants safe-havens, which is threat to their security but these are violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and has kept the tribal belt of Pakistan on fire. FATA is burning, no doubt the militancy and extremism are main reasons behind but all these are connected directly and indirectly with the US policy contours, whether in the time of Soviet invasion or now by direct intervention in Afghanistan in order to become global hegemon. This is direct interpretation of offensive realism, where a regional hegemon have insatiate quest for power maximization. In the same way the US had kept Pakistan oblivion about Operation code named Neptune Spear which was a great blow to the key ally of the US in war against terror. Following the same offensive mode in Salala post incident, a blunt aggression and assault on Pakistan territorial integrity, which is strategic challenge to Pakistan foreign policy. The above-mentioned tragic incidents have indeed brought a humiliating focus on our state.

3.Recommendations: Drone attacks will die their own death once we know the truth. It is still not clear whether Pakistan government allowed these attacks or not. In any case they should end with the departure of US forces from Afghanistan.

- We should never try to confront US on this issue and down the drone. This may give an excuse to US to destroy our vital assets. We should do it only when we are strong enough to do it and the world opinion is with us.
- Furthermore, despite 18th amendment the foreign policy subject belongs to federal government rather than provincial. So only the federal government has the right to decide about NATO supply blockade. There arise no justification on the part of provincial government to decide and act upon in this regard. Every country live according to own national interests that how to safeguard these interests.
- Recently, the matter do not belong to NATO working in Afghanistan, rather it is the time of their exit, to vacate Afghanistan, it is transition time so it is the time for Pakistan to secure short term political gains. The US is searching alternate exit route for herself and It will be tilted more towards India if we take coercive stance at this hour.
- Our security has been directly connected with the drone strikes, but the drone issue can be countered by highlighting it on visits to the US and conducting dialogues on the matter demand sound bases.
- To the great dismay FATA is not with the writ of the state so the access to far flung agencies are not possible to clamp down non-state actors. Besides there exit double policy in Pakistan, where the provinces are utilizing the foreign aids and on the other hands they are blocking the supply line of coalition forces as well. Pakistan should have clean own house and furthermore clear cut policy should be adopted against non-state actors.
- Pakistani government should ensure political reforms in FATA so that their draconian laws come to naught and they could be merged in mainstream of Pakistani Politics. Only then the security can be stabilized there and militancy would curbed.

4. Conclusion: Everyone wonders in agony if there will ever be an end to crises and tragedies in our country. We somehow seem to have so mismanaged our affairs as to lose respect and credibility in the eyes of the world. Pakistan is now going through the gravest crisis of its history. Its national edifice is being weakened methodically by keeping it engaged on multiple external and domestic fronts. In case of drone strikes if Pakistan remained stubborn and even takes coercive statecraft but the matter of fact is that Pakistan being a minor state cannot maintain coercive statecraft for a long time because the more she focused on is to secure own territory, to neutralize the radical forces.

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