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A Theory Of The Drone



Synopsis

Drone warfare has raised profound ethical and constitutional questions both in the halls of Congress and among the U.S. public. Not since debates over nuclear warfare has American military strategy been the subject of discussion in living rooms, classrooms, and houses of worship. Yet as this groundbreaking new work shows, the full implications of drones have barely been addressed in the recent media storm. In a unique take on a subject that has grabbed headlines and is consuming billions of taxpayer dollars each year, philosopher Grégoire Chamayou applies the lens of philosophy to our understanding of how drones are changing our world. For the first time in history, a state has claimed the right to wage war across a mobile battlefield that potentially spans the globe. Remote-control flying weapons, he argues, take us well beyond even George W. Bush's justification for the war on terror. What we are seeing is a fundamental transformation of the laws of war that have defined military conflict as between combatants. As more and more drones are launched into battle, war now has the potential to transform into a realm of secretive, targeted assassinations of individuals beyond the view and control not only of potential enemies but also of citizens of democracies themselves. Far more than a simple technology, Chamayou shows, drones are profoundly influencing what it means for a democracy to wage war. *A Theory of the Drone* will be essential reading for all who care about this important question.

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Customer Reviews

"A Theory of the Drone" by French author Grégoire Chamayou (translated by Janet Lloyd) offers an immensely valuable, timely and powerful critique of drone warfare including its implications for

democracy. This exceptional, well-written and accessible book is divided into five parts:I.

‘Techniques and Tactics’ explains that drones were first proven by Israel, inspiring the U.S. to develop a drone program that shields its pilots from harm and thus makes asymmetrical warfare possible. Mr. Chamyou discusses how the "all seeing eye" of the drone’s surveillance and information technologies intends to schematize targets in a legally dubious form of militarized manhunt. Although American generals believe that the unreachable power of drones will deprive the enemy of hope, the terrible randomness and imprecision of drone attacks has embittered locals and has thus perpetuated an unwinnable war. The author also warns that less expensive drone technologies will likely soon be developed by the resistance with dangerous and unpredictable consequences for us all.II. ‘Ethos and Psyche’ compares and contrasts the kamikaze’s use of body as weapon with the drone’s use of weapon without body. Mr. Chamyou contends that drones are in the tradition of colonial violence spatially waged against indigenous peoples through use of mercenaries and technology. As the traditional militarized ethics of courage and sacrifice have been challenged by the removal of drone operators from combat zones, Mr. Chamyou considers the military’s spurious claim that drone pilots are bona fide warriors who suffer severe emotional traumas; and yet can somehow navigate seamlessly between deadly work at the air force base by day and peaceful domesticity at home by night.III.

Well presented and informative, the author know his material very well. The only draw back is the lack of professional academic disengagement. This book is written with an obvious and intentional bias and a left leaning penchant that unfortunately detracts from the overall presentation. This author has an axe to grind and he applies it sharply and randomly to any and all who disagree with his jaded and one sided perspective. This is unfortunate, because it is well written and well presented, unfortunately it only paints half a picture: those according to the preferences of the author. This is one of those titles you need to read with some good cognitive calculus because the bias is subtle and shrewd, intended to sway the reader in a specific direction. I would still recommend the title, albeit with the reservation of making sure to be aware of this bias before diving into it. Sound research, if rather one sided. It is particularly noticeable after reaching the middle of the book around page 100. there Chamayou unleashes his pent up fury, so to speak. He departs from neutral academic observation to adopting barely disguised scorn and derision. While the author is obviously well-versed and erudite, he is also Machiavellian in his distribution of his rancor. He commences with taking the positive points about the use of drone technology and counters them with selective counter-arguments in unsound, typically liberal teleological fashion. He is barely able

to constrain himself from labelling the pilots of drones as cowards, without virtue, while overlooking the fact that these self-same so-called "cowards," are taking out the "victims" responsible for ruthlessly ordering and arranging for the slaughter of innocent men women and children.

This is an important book for those who wish to understand the ramifications of drone warfare. From time to time I have wondered what are the practical uses of philosophy and philosophers. They seem to be abstract entities without any connection to the "real" world. This book traces the philosophical underpinnings of drone warfare, their connections to ethics, and our vision of ourselves as exceptional and moral people. This matters if we wish to set ourselves up as the world's leader and expect others to follow. If we are seen as immoral, then it will be more difficult to get other nations to do what we want them to do. There are a large number of "take aways" from this book. For me some of the primary ones are: Drone warfare is not warfare. It is hunting and killing. Warfare traditionally implied some risk to combatants on both sides. The operators of drones are thousands of miles from their targets. They face no risk at all. The targets generally don't ever know what hit them. Killing in combat is justified (is not murder) because both sides are at risk. With drones, it is simply assassination if not outright murder. The use of drones in the war against terror turns our definition of bravery and courage on its head. Enemy fighters in general and suicide bombers in particular who are willing to die for their beliefs and to protect their homes are labeled "cowards". Those that kill from air conditioned offices thousands of miles from harm's way are, if not exactly heroes, than still worthy of a special medal for their efforts. The use of drones leads the enemy, which can't hit back at the drones and their operators, to seek out softer targets, often the very people our military is trying to protect.

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