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## The shadow wars: An analysis of Associated Press coverage of drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen

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THE SHADOW WARS: AN ANALYSIS OF ASSOCIATED PRESS COVERAGE OF  
DRONE STRIKES IN PAKISTAN AND YEMEN

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the degree

Master of Arts

Anthony Roth

University of Northern Iowa

August 2014

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to look for the dominant frames found in AP coverage of CIA drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen, compare this data to public opinion of drone strikes, and to look at how often the AP was covering CIA drone strikes in relation to the total number of strikes taking place. To begin the CIA drone program, framing, determinants of international news coverage, the press and classified information leaks, and press theories will be reviewed. To accomplish the purpose of this study a content analysis was conducted on data obtained from a LexisNexis search. The search terms were constructed to insure that the search only returned CIA strikes. The search returned 319 AP stories about CIA drone strikes. The data was coded and analyzed. A list of all known drone strikes was obtained from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism and each strike was looked at to see if the AP and *New York Times* had a story on it. The results showed that the dominant positive and negative frames that existed in AP coverage went along the same lines as the United States government's foreign policy. The stories tended to highlight the benefits of the program while lacking focuses on the biggest disadvantages. This result was related to public opinion of drone strikes. Public opinion tended to be in favor of drone strikes, which wasn't surprising because of the frames utilized by the AP. The results also showed that the AP was doing a much better job of covering CIA drone strikes than the *New York Times*, but there was still room for improvement on the part of the AP. The conclusion of this study is that the AP

demonstrates a troubling pattern of coverage on CIA drone strikes. This study also illustrated deeper issues surrounding press theories. The results of this study indicate that moving toward the democratic socialist theory of the press may be the answer to some of the problems that exist in the press today.

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Entitled: The Shadow Wars: An Analysis of Associated Press Coverage of Drone Strikes  
in Pakistan and Yemen

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The CIA's use of drones overseas has been secretive since the first targeted killing of Nek Muhammad Wazir in 2004 (Mazzetti, 2013). Recently, President Barack Obama has ramped up the use of drones for targeted killings overseas. In President Obama's first two years in office there were almost four times as many drone strikes authorized by his administration than the entire Bush administration (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2011). Recently, NBC News released a Department of Justice White Paper that outlined the legal justification for a targeted killing by drone. This release has introduced a series of demands from the public and Congress for increased transparency in the drone program. While these demands have been made there is still a shroud of secrecy that surrounds the CIA's use of unmanned aerial vehicles for targeted killings.

To gain a better understanding of how the press has covered CIA drone strikes it is important to look at Associated Press coverage. The Associated Press (AP) is one of the world's largest news agencies that distributes its content to over 1,700 newspapers and over 5,000 TV and radio stations, and its news content is seen by half of the world's population on any given day (Associated Press, 2013). This fact means that the AP has an extremely large reach and because of this large reach it has the ability to influence public opinion on drone strikes. The AP has the ability to influence public opinion based on how it decides to frame CIA drone strike stories. One frame that is used by the AP is the

“violation of sovereignty” which can be seen here: “The use of drones has skyrocketed under the Obama administration but has dropped off recently in Pakistan, which views the program as a violation of its sovereignty.” Another frame utilized by the AP is the problem of civilian casualties seen here: “Among the Pakistani public, the drone campaign is vilified because of its perceived civilian casualties, an allegation disputed by the US.” These two quotes provide examples of different frames utilized by the AP. The different frames utilized by the AP can have an effect on how readers view the CIA drone program. The AP’s ability to distribute their stories to a wide array of newspapers, TV stations, and radio stations makes it an important news organization to analyze. This study looks at the entire history of Associated Press coverage of CIA drone strikes. To gain the complete history of AP coverage a LexisNexis search of AP coverage of CIA drone strikes was performed. The search returned 349 articles ranging from 2002 to 2013. The articles were coded to look for the dominant frames that are present in AP coverage of CIA drone strikes. After the dominant frames were determined, a critical analysis of the relationship between the dominant frames found in AP coverage and public opinion of these strikes both in the United States and internationally was conducted. The goal of this critical analysis is to determine how AP coverage effects public support or disapproval of CIA drone strikes. To begin this thesis there will be a review of the CIA drone program, framing, determinants of international news coverage, the press and classified information, and press theories.

### CIA Drone Program

The CIA's drone program is extensive, complex, and shrouded in secrecy. Much of the information about the program is shrouded in secrecy because much of the information about it is classified. The secret nature of the program means that little is known about it outside of the CIA and the executive branch. In the following section, what little information is known publicly will be presented.

The drone program started in the late 1990s when unarmed versions of the Predator drone were used for spying on Al Qaeda in Afghanistan (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2011). The program remained a small intelligence gathering operation up until the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001. Following these attacks President George W. Bush ordered that the Predator drones be equipped with missiles that could be used to target and kill leaders of Al Qaeda (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2011). This order was completed through a memorandum of notification by President Bush giving the CIA the ability to kill members of Al Qaeda (Mayer, 2009). Congress followed up President Bush's approval with a bill called the Authorization for Use of Military Force. The Bush administration labeled terrorism an act of war, so that there would be no need to give terrorists due process under international law. The program was greatly expanded under President Obama. During his first two years in the White House, his administration had authorized almost four times as many drone strikes as the Bush administration had in the eight years that Bush was in the White House (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2011). A former White House official stated that at any given time, the CIA has a number of drones flying

over Pakistan looking for targets. The official stated that the large number of drones in the skies sometimes lead to arguments over which operator can claim a target (Mayer, 2009).

The use of drones by the United States has grown so rapidly that drone manufacturer, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, can barely keep up with the government's demand for drones (Mayer, 2009). General Atomics Aeronautical Systems is responsible for the manufacture of the Predator and Reaper drones. The number of drones that the CIA has is classified and therefore not known by the public. While the CIA won't share their exact numbers the number of drones that the United States Air Forces has grown from 50 to nearly 200. With the Air Force's fleet growing so rapidly, it is safe to assume that the CIA's fleet has also grown.

The drone model that the CIA uses most often is the Predator drone (Mayer, 2009). The Predator drone is flown by CIA intelligence officers and private contractors. According to a former official, private contractors are usually former military or intelligence officers (Mayer, 2009). The task of operating the drone is usually split into two teams. One team is usually stationed as close as possible to the target area and is responsible for launching and landing the drone. Once the drone is in the air the controls are handed over to operators at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia (Radsan & Murphy, 2011). The operators in Langley operate the aircraft with joysticks and computer monitors. These operators do not receive any formal flight training (Mayer, 2009). The CIA often receives data from the NSA and this data is used to help confirm the identity of

any potential target. The final authority to order a drone strike rests in CIA officials. The CIA most likely has put in place standards and procedures for such attacks (Radsan & Murphy, 2011). These standards were most likely developed by high ranking CIA officials and the CIA's Office of General Counsel to insure the legality of the standards.

Up until recently the American public was in the dark on the legal justification for the targeted killing of a United States citizen (Mayer, 2009). International law on such strikes is very clear. International law required that a target must be a recognized terrorist group that is engaging in armed conflict. The use of force must be a necessity. There must be no alternative to killing the target. The target also must be in direct participation of hostilities. Finally, the country where the target is located must give its approval of the strike. Recently a Department of Justice White Paper was leaked to NBC News and it revealed the CIA's legal justification for a targeted killing. The paper states that there are three conditions that must be met for a US operation using lethal force against a US citizen who is a senior leader of Al Qaeda or an associated force in a foreign country:

- (1) An informed; high-level official of the U.S. government has determined that the targeted individual poses an imminent threat of violent attack against the United States;
- (2) capture is infeasible, and the United States continues to monitor whether capture becomes feasible; and
- (3) the operation would be conducted in a manner consistent with applicable law of war principles. (Department of Justice, 2013, p. 1)

This description was kept secret until recently, when it was leaked to NBC News and subsequently other news organizations. When this document was released it caused some outrage among lawmakers in Washington as well as citizens across the country (Isikoff, 2013).



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Framing

Framing is a very important tool for analyzing news coverage. How a news organization decides to frame a topic has an effect on how consumers of that news interpret it. Framing is also useful in looking at how a news organization covers a specific topic. It shows what that organization chose to cover and what they chose to leave out. To get a little bit better understanding of what framing is, let's look at Entman's (1993) definition:

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 for the item described. (p. 52)

Frames usually do three things: they identify, evaluate, and offer recommendations (Entman, 1993). An example of this principle can be found in *Washington Post* editorial pieces on Libya in 2011. These pieces identified that there was a problem in Libya and the problem was a stalemate between opposition forces and the army (Pincus, 2011). They evaluated the situation and found it to be quite dire. Finally, they made a recommendation based on this evaluation, which was the fastest way to end the fighting in Libya was to remove Gaddafi from power.

We find frames in four spots within the mass communication process. They are in the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture in which the news operates

(Entman, 1993). Frames are located within the communicator because the communicator decides both consciously and unconsciously what frames to include and which to leave out. Frames are found in the text because all text is framed in one way or another. Frames are found in the receiver because each individual will receive and interpret the text a little bit differently. Finally, frames are found in culture because the culture has a large influence on how frames are constructed and interpreted.

There are usually five aspects that affect how frames are constructed by the media. They are social norms, organizational forces, the pressure of interest groups, journalistic procedures, and ideological alignments of journalists (Scheufele, 1999). Social norms are those norms that are created and influenced by the culture in which the journalist operates. Organizational forces are those forces that exist within the news organization. Pressure from interest groups is the pressure from various groups that hold power over that news organization such as advertisers. Journalistic procedures and ideological alignments of journalists are found in the code of ethics that journalists follow, as well as, the personal beliefs of the journalist. According to Scheufele there are four aspects that influence the formation of frames by the audience: patterns in the arrangements of words or phrases, overall newsworthiness of an event, thematic structures, and stylistic choices. Patterns in the arrangements of words or phrases are how the news is presented. The overall newsworthiness of an event is how important the event is to the consumer of the news. Thematic structures are how the piece is constructed with relation to themes. Finally, stylistic choices are how the piece is laid out or arranged.

The main effect of framing is to make specific matter, pictures, or thoughts relevant to a topic (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). Framing is considered one of the methods that news organizations utilize in deciding how to present the news. Framing has been seen as a possible method for the deception of audiences, but it is often used for the purpose of reducing the complexity of issues so an audience member can understand the issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). A media frame is considered a shaping tool utilized by content producers for media content (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007).

### Determinants and Types of International News Coverage

International news is generally given low priority by news media in the United States. The amount of foreign news that is covered by US news media is especially low compared to domestic topics such as national news and entertainment coverage. Most Americans will state that they do not find international news very interesting or relevant (Hess, 1996). However, this lack of interest tends to change if the United States or one of its close allies is involved in an international event. Foreign news coverage tended to be higher during the Cold War, but that all changed when the Berlin Wall went down in 1989, causing US news organizations to return their focus to more domestic issues (Kim, 2002). The United States saw another surge in international news coverage after the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001. Interest in international news peaked in 2004 when 52% of respondents of a Pew Research survey said that they followed international news most of the time (Pew Research Center, 2012). However, this increase didn't last long and by 2008 the number of respondents who said they followed international news

most of the time was down to 39% and remained there as of 2012. News organizations often have similar views about what foreign news coverage should contain (Riffe, Ellis, Roger, Van Ommeren & Woodman, 1986). One example of similar views about foreign news coverage can be seen in coverage of natural disasters. News organizations will have similar views that natural disasters are newsworthy. Another important aspect of US foreign news coverage is that foreign news is often borrowed from another source by US news media (Riffe, Aust, Gibson, Viall & YI, 1993). US news organizations are usually not sending foreign correspondents or operating foreign news desks, they are getting the information from a news service such as the Associated Press or Reuters. The fact that news organizations aren't collecting the data themselves is especially important in drone strikes because the information almost always comes from outside sources. These sources include foreign media, both free and controlled by the state.

It is important to look at what makes foreign events newsworthy or important to US citizens. This information is important to look at because it determines what foreign news content is covered and why it is covered. This material is very instrumental to performing a critical analysis of news coverage of certain topics such as CIA drone strikes. There are two factors that are used in considering what events are newsworthy and they are event factors and country characteristics. There is also seven different types of news stories that international events usually fall into.

### Event Factors

One aspect of foreign news that draws the attention of US news media is event factors. Event factors include deviance and whether the United States was directly involved in the event (Hester, 1974). As far as this thesis is concerned, deviance is anytime someone goes against accepted norms. A recent example of deviance can be found in Syria. In recent months there has been an increase in news coverage of Syria. This increase in coverage started after suspected chemical weapons use by President Bashar Al-Assad (Landler & Schmitt, 2013). The act of using chemical weapons is seen as deviant by the international community (United Nations, 2013). Because this event was seen as possessing deviance, the amount of US news coverage went up. Whether the United States is directly involved is another important criterion in determining what international events are newsworthy (Hester, 1974). US newspaper coverage of foreign events is usually concerned with conflicts (Riffe & Shaw, 1982). Foreign news that contains deviance and political or economic significance to the United States is the most covered foreign news in the United States. Once again we can see an example of this playing out with news coverage of Syria. Syria contains both deviance and political significance to the United States. Syria contains political significance to the United States because the United States and Russia continue to disagree on a solution to end the violence in that Middle East conflict (Black, 2012).

The second most covered events are those that contain deviance, but feature no significance or little significance to the United States. These incidents allow countries

that are outside the core set of countries to be considered newsworthy (Chang, 1998). The core set of countries is comprised of the most powerful nations in terms of political, economic, military, and cultural strength (Wu, 2000). These countries have traditionally had the ability to set the rules and command the range of actions performed on the world stage. Countries outside of these core nations are usually labeled as outlying countries because events that happen in these countries are generally seen as not newsworthy (Chang, 1998). These countries are often seen as not mattering because they are often under developed compared to the core countries (Galtung, 1971). However, these countries can be considered newsworthy when an event takes place in them that contains deviance such as a natural disaster (Chang, 1998). Deviance is one of the largest influences on whether foreign events are considered newsworthy (Shoemaker, Danielian, & Brendlinger, 1991). Some other influences on foreign news were risk to global harmony and danger to the United States, expected reader interest, relevance, US participation, and journalistic backgrounds (Chang & Lee, 1992).

### Country Characteristics

Some other elements that affect foreign events newsworthiness are nation characteristics (Shoemaker et al., 1991). Nation characteristics include economic importance, political significance, cultural significance, and communication restrictions. Economic importance includes a number of monetary indicators that are important in the era of globalization including gross domestic profit (GDP), the number of US businesses in the country, the total economic investment by the United States, and the amount of

trade between the United States and the country. In recent years there has been a trend of US newspapers covering more foreign news with economic significance (Riffe & Shaw, 1982). This shift could be a result of the decrease in the number of conflicts abroad. Because there is a decrease in deviance news organizations have had to look to other indicators of what foreign news they should cover. Political significance is mostly tied to the military and monetary aid. Political significance includes the total amount of US military present in the country, military alliances which the country participates in with the United States, and the total economic and military aid that is provided to that country by the United States. Cultural significance includes any aspects of a country's culture that are similar to the characteristics of American culture. Ethnic and religious similarities to the United States are just two examples of cultural aspects. These aspects can exert a large influence on whether an incident is considered newsworthy (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). For example, certain events such as a royal wedding in the Middle East would not be seen as being newsworthy by United States media because of cultural differences. However, an event such as a royal wedding in the UK will be seen as newsworthy because of the cultural similarities. Communications restrictions are any restrictions that are in place in any given foreign country. These can include language similarity, literacy rate, newspaper, television, and radio distribution and proximity. Geographical and cultural proximity do not exert much force on whether a foreign event is considered newsworthy (Chang, Lau, & Xiaoming, 2000). Geographical and cultural proximity can only aid in being considered newsworthy, it is often not a deciding factor.

### Story Types

United States news coverage of foreign events typically fits seven different types of stories. They are: US actions abroad, foreign activities that affect Americans, relations with totalitarian nations, foreign elections and transfers of power, major conflicts, and disasters with great loss of life, and oppression under foreign dictators (Gans, 1979).

After looking through this information one would come to the conclusion that CIA drone strikes abroad should be considered newsworthy by US media. The strikes contain some key aspects that make foreign events newsworthy. First, drone strikes are deviant because they go against accepted norms of war. Drone strikes currently have a murky legal status in the international community. Second, this event is direct participation by the United States abroad making these events newsworthy. Third, drone strikes hold political significance to the United States. These strikes hold political significance because they are often carried out under the banner of eliminating terrorism to protect the United States. With the accumulation of all these factors it would be a safe assumption that drone strikes should be one of the more covered foreign events by US media.

### The Press and Classified Information Leaks

There is often a troubled relationship between the press and the government. While the press is guaranteed freedoms of press and speech by the United States Constitution, the government from time to time has tried to restrict this freedom, most often in the name of national security. Sometimes the press will print information that



government has deemed classified. A recent example of this phenomenon can be seen with the recent publication of classified information leaked by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden. While the press has the right to free speech, the government also has the right to keep certain material protected from public eyes. In this section the First Amendment, shield laws, and the Espionage Acts will be discussed. The section will conclude with a discussion of two cases where the federal government attempted to stop the press from printing classified materials.

### Journalists and the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment

The first amendment to the constitution of the United States guarantees the freedom of speech, religion, press, the right to peaceably assemble, and the right to petition the government. However, how much protection does the First Amendment offer when a journalist is at odds with the government? We are all familiar with the disclaimers that the information came from a confidential source or the source wished to remain anonymous because they were not allowed to publicly discuss the event. There are a number of reasons why reporters keep sources anonymous from the protection of the source or because the source may “dry up” (Blasi, 1971). Journalists' ability to keep sources confidential hasn't always been a guaranteed freedom. In 1972 three journalists were subpoenaed to testify in front of a grand jury in *Branzburg v. Hayes* (Porter, 2007). The journalists were asked to testify to what they saw when they were reporting on a story. The three journalists argued that they had the right to keep their sources confidential because the revealing of their identities could compromise their ability to

gain information in the future. The US Supreme Court ruled against the journalists in a five to four decision (Porter, 2007). The court stated that the government's right to prosecute a crime outweighed journalists' right to keep their sources confidential. The decision was seen by many as a serious setback to press freedom in the United States (Mehra, 1982). However, Justice Powell wrote in his concurrence that a reporter's privilege was not an absolute right; it was instead a qualified privilege which can become invalid under certain conditions (Porter, 2007). This view was interesting because it was seen as a departure from the rest of the judges that voted against the reporter's privilege.

Journalists were on shaky ground after the *Branzburg v. Hayes* decision.

However, journalists have secured a victory in the form of shield laws. Shield laws are found in 31 states and the District of Columbia (Clark & Barnette, 2012). A number of other states have court precedents that establish shields for reporters (Campbell, Martin & Fabos, 2013). These laws are generally much broader and offer additional protection to journalists. Shield laws allow journalists to keep their sources confidential in criminal cases and grand juries. While shield laws offer additional protection to journalists, they are not perfect. Shield laws often require a journalist to be associated with a traditional source of news such as newspapers, radio, and television (Clark & Barnette, 2012).

Other shield laws require that an individual makes their livelihood as a journalist. While each shield law is a little different, they often only protect formal journalists attached to traditional forms of news such as radio, television, and newspapers. While all states except Wyoming have some kind of shield law protection there is currently no such

protection at the federal level (Specter, 2008). This fact means that journalists are not protected from being asked to reveal sources to federal authorities or grand juries.

The Espionage Act was passed in 1917 after the start of the First World War (Clark & Barnette, 2012). The act has been amended a number of times since it was passed in 1917. The current act provides punishment for any individual who communicates, delivers, or transmits any information relating to national defense (Vladeck, 2008). The key aspect here is any individual is susceptible to punishment for disseminating information related to national defense. This punishment is not applicable to the press. Congress has rejected numerous proposals prohibiting the publication of information relating to national defense. The United States has yet to prosecute and convict a journalist or publisher for publishing classified information (Clark & Barnette, 2012). However, one of the United States 'closest allies, the United Kingdom, is currently investigating whether or not staff members of *The Guardian* can be prosecuted for committing acts of terrorism by publishing stories about the NSA and GCHQ (James & Holden, 2013). The outcome of this case could have implications on whether or not US officials will push forward with changes to the law, so that they can employ similar tactics against US journalists.

### Pentagon Papers

The release of the Pentagon Papers is one example where the government tried to stop the publication of classified information. This case involved Daniel Ellsberg a United States military analyst who was employed by the RAND Corporation. He came

into possession of the Pentagon Papers, a classified study of US decision making in Vietnam (Bierbauer, 2011). Ellsberg initially tried to show the study to several United States senators, but had little luck. Ellsberg's backup plan was to take the study to the *New York Times* in the hope that they would publish the information to the public. Ellsberg found *New York Times* journalist Neil Sheehan, who was interested in the study (Bierbauer, 2011). The initial contact between Ellsberg and Sheehan took place in 1971. Ellsberg first showed the study to Sheehan in March of 1971 and the first story was in the *New York Times* by June of 1971. By the time the third story was to run the Nixon administration acquired an injunction to halt the printing of the article (Apple, 1996). Ellsberg also gave a copy of the study to the *Washington Post* in the hopes of getting around the injunction. Soon the *Washington Post* became included in the injunction by the Nixon administration. Both of these cases quickly made their way to US Supreme Court. The court ruled the government had not met the burden of showing justification for prior restraint. This decision was seen as a victory for journalists across America because they were able to publish classified information without the fear of retribution from the government. The decision helped balance the public's right to know against the governments wish to keep information pertaining to national security secret (Bierbauer, 2011).

### WikiLeaks

The government once again tried to stop the publication of classified material in 2010 when WikiLeaks revealed a large number of classified government documents and

cables. Wikileaks is an online nonprofit organization that has the goal of publishing secret information, news leaks, and classified media from anonymous sources. The number of documents leaked to the site numbered in the hundreds of thousands and dealt with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Khan, 2012). A number of newspapers around the world were chosen by WikiLeaks to receive the documents first. The *New York Times* was selected in the United States and they put their top military affairs reporter, Eric Schmitt on the story. He looked through the information and determined that all of the documents were legitimate (Bierbauer, 2011). The *Times* then went on to publish some of the information that it had received. The government was unable to stop the release of this information because of the Pentagon Papers ruling over 40 years earlier. However, the government did find someone to punish. The government tracked the leak of the information to then Army Private Bradley Manning. Manning was arrested and charged with leaking classified information and was charged under the Espionage Act (Papandrea, 2011). The government has also looked into whether or not they can charge WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange under the Espionage Act. It was thought that the government would be unable to prosecute him because he was not the person who gathered the information. However, the case is murky because Assange is not a United States citizen. He is an Australian citizen and is currently in political asylum in the Ecuador embassy in England. It currently looks like the United States Government has abandoned its plans of charging Assange. According to sources the United States would not be able to prosecute him without prosecuting other US news organizations and journalists (Horwitz, 2013). This section has provided another example where the government has been unhappy with

a release of information by the press, but has been able to stop the release. In the next section press theories will be reviewed.

### Press Theories

When looking at international news coverage it is important to look at how news coverage affects people's knowledge of the world around them. For many citizens of the United States the only way to become informed on topics is to consume news. Because of this strong relationship between the news and knowledge of current events it is important to critically look at the current state of press coverage. To accomplish this goal, this thesis will explore current problems with news coverage in the United States, the relationship between news coverage and knowledge of current events, and how knowledge of current events impacts voting. Press theories help to explain why the press operates the way that it does. The most relevant press theories to United States foreign policy are social responsibility theory and the democratic socialist theory of press.

Most citizens of the United States do not care enough to understand much about the government (Entman, 1989). For many people their only source of information about the government is from the news media. However, since many individuals do not want to know the exact details of the government there is little demand placed on news organizations for top-notch news reporting. Another problem is found in the economic model of the news organization. The news organization is trying to capture a large market share of readers or viewers because they need the advertising to stay profitable (Entman, 1989). This factor takes away from the autonomy of the news organization

because the news organization must follow public taste for news. According to Entman “to become informed and hold government accountable, the general public needs to obtain news that is comprehensive yet interesting and understandable, that conveys facts and outcomes, not cosmetic images and airy promises” (Entman, 1989, p. 18). However, this is not what is demanded. He argues that most news intended for mass consumption falls short of this standard. The economics of the business is one problem. Economic competition encourages news organizations to minimize costs and generate growing profits. Economic pressures weaken journalism’s ability to achieve free press ideals. Economic pressures shape the values that guide the creation of news conciseness, straightforwardness, predictability, timeliness (Entman, 1989). The news largely consists of information supplied by sources who may candidly support democracy, but in each specific encounter with the press they must protect their own political interests. News organizations wind up depending upon elites whose primary goal when talking with reporters is to manage publicity rather than illuminate the truth. Competition in the political market enforces the requirement that elites manage news; competition in the economic market enforces cost minimization and profit maximization, which means news organizations must depend upon elites and make news attractive to the largest number of consumers (Entman, 1989). Genuine accountability news requires proper historical context, diverse perspectives, and explicit linkages to the officials responsible for policy outcomes. Such reporting allows ordinary Americans to understand how the actions or plans of government affect their interests and concerns. The typical newspaper or news broadcast fails to achieve this ideal, and therefore, flunks the test of the marketplace of

ideas and because of this fact the idea of the marketplace of ideas is quite flawed (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). This idea is flawed because of the economic interests that drive news organizations (Entman, 1989). They have to cover stories that people will want to read, listen to, or watch. They also have to be quite sympathetic to advertisers. These factors make it quite hard for a news organization to objectively cover the news.

The social responsibility theory of press has its origins in the Hutchins Commission, which was set up during World War II to determine the function of the press in a democratic society. The information gathered from this commission was used by three University of Illinois researchers to create the four theories of the press. The four theories that they created are the authoritarian theory, the libertarian theory, the social responsibility theory, and the Soviet Communism theory (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1963). This thesis focuses on the social responsibility theory because it was seen as the theory that was to be practiced in the United States. The social responsibility theory retains freedom as the basic principle for arranging public communication. This freedom includes both the media and the public (Siebert et al., 1963). Under this theory the media have a moral obligation to provide citizens with sufficient information so that citizens can make informed decisions. This press theory posits six functions of the press. They are: to service the political system by providing information, discussion, and debate on public affairs, informing the public as to make it capable of self-government, protecting the rights of the individual by serving as a watchdog against the government, servicing the economic system by bringing the buyers and sellers of goods together through advertisements, providing entertainment, and maintain its own financial stability as to be



free from pressures of special interests (Siebert et al., 1963). Under this theory of the press, professionalism is very important. Professionalism has four tasks: to formulate the code of conduct for the press, improve the standards of journalism, safeguard the interests of journalism and journalists, and criticize and make some penalty for violating the code of conduct. Professionalism serves as the main regulator of the media market. The idea is that if professionalism is high media organizations will regulate themselves making it unnecessary for the government to intervene (Siebert et al., 1963). Another key aspect of social responsibility theory is the idea that the marketplace will be self-correcting. This aspect means that if the news industry is doing a poor job of presenting the news, that consumers of news will become unhappy and cause change in that area. This theory is based heavily on the idea that professionalism and the marketplace will be enough to ensure that citizens receive enough information to ensure that they are capable of self-government (Siebert et al., 1963). Next, the democratic socialist theory of the press will be discussed.

The democratic socialist theory of the press is the creation of Robert Picard in the mid 1980's. Picard created this theory because he was not satisfied with the current theories of press in the United States (Picard, 1985). Picard thought that it was stretch to assume that media organizations had a moral obligation to the people and that they would follow this obligation. Under democratic socialist theory of the press the purpose of the press is to provide a path for the expression of public views and to stimulate the political and social debates necessary for the development of democratic governance (Picard, 1985). In Picard's view, the government plays a much more important role, to ensure that

citizens have the ability to use the press and to promote and preserve media plurality. The government has a number of options to accomplish these goals through government subsidies and tax breaks just to name a few. Picard envisions that media ownership is in the non-profit sector in nonprofit corporations (such as today's ProPublica), journalist operated cooperatives, and other collective organizations (Picard, 1985). Under this theory the media is not a tool for private owners or the government. The media is to be considered an instrument of the people. The media should be thought of as a public utility that is used for the distribution of the people's aspirations, ideas, praise and criticism of the state and society. The cornerstone of this theory is the idea that society uses media heavily to meet social needs, and the government should ensure that these needs are met. Under this theory the media is operated for the citizens and to protect the social, economic, and political rights of the citizens (Picard, 1985). This theory of the press lines up with some of the ideas expressed by Entman in his work *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics*. This work provides an interesting area of research on whether or not the United States would benefit from employing a democratic socialist theory of the press.

This section concludes the review of literature. This review has covered framing, determinants of international news coverage, the press and classified information leaks, and press theories. It is important to once again state the objectives of this research.

RQ 1: What are the dominant frames found in AP coverage of CIA drone strikes?

RQ 2: What relationship exists between the dominant frames and public opinion on drone strikes?

RQ 3: How often are drone strikes being covered by the AP and the *New York Times*?

These research questions are important to our understanding of how drone strikes are covered by the news media in the United States. These questions are also important for advancing our understanding of the relationship that exists between news coverage of drone strikes and public opinion of drone strikes. In the following section the methods that were used for this study are described.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

The data for this study came from a content analysis of Associated Press coverage of drone strikes (see Stemler, 2001; Kaid & Wadsworth, 1989 for an overview of content analysis). A content analysis was used because it was the best method for answering the research questions of this study. A content analysis was used because it has proven to be an effective tool in looking at the framing of news articles (Entman, 1993). The Associated Press was selected because of its large reach. On any given day half of the world's population sees AP news content. This represents an enormous reach for a news organization. Another reason why the Associated Press was selected is because it often feeds its news to other newspapers, television stations, radio stations and websites. There are 1,400 US newspapers that subscribe to the AP and thousands of television and radio broadcast subscribers. These numbers are important because the AP provides a great deal of news across the United States. This factor is also important because the AP is a leader in foreign news. The large size of the AP allows it to collect large amounts of foreign news. This is made possible by the fact that the AP has offices across the globe.

To look at Associated Press coverage of drone strikes a LexisNexis search was conducted. The search terms were as follows: "atleast2(drone strikes) AND atleast2(Pakistan) or atleast2(Yemen)." These search terms were used to insure that the returned articles would be about CIA drone strikes. The CIA is responsible for the strikes that take place in Pakistan and Yemen. This search returned 319 results ranging from

March 2009 to December 2013. All of the articles were coded except for the 36 articles that were thrown out because they either did not talk about the drone program or did not contain sufficient data about the drone program. The articles were coded according to a coding sheet that was created for this project (see appendix A for the coding sheet). The articles were coded on what frames existed in Associated Press coverage of CIA drone strikes. Once the coding of the articles was completed the dominant frames of Associated Press coverage of CIA drone strikes was determined. It was determined by looking at the coding sheets and adding up the dominant frames found in Associated Press coverage of CIA drone strikes. For example, some of the positive frames of the CIA drone strikes are “protection of US troops abroad,” “reduction of terrorist numbers,” “progress on the war on terror.” Some of the negative frames of the CIA drone strikes are “killing of civilians,” “the legal issues surrounding the program,” and “the targeting of American citizens.” The dominant frames found in AP coverage were presented as the dominant frames found overall, in Pakistan, and in Yemen. To accomplish this goal coding was broken down into three categories: all articles, articles with datelines from Pakistan, and articles with datelines from Yemen. To look at how often the press was covering drone strikes, data from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism and the Long War Journal was used. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism features a list of every suspected drone strike in both Yemen and Pakistan. Each strike that took place in Yemen and Pakistan from 2011 to 2013 was noted and then a search was performed to see if there was a story for each strike for the Associated Press and the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* was used for comparison purposes.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

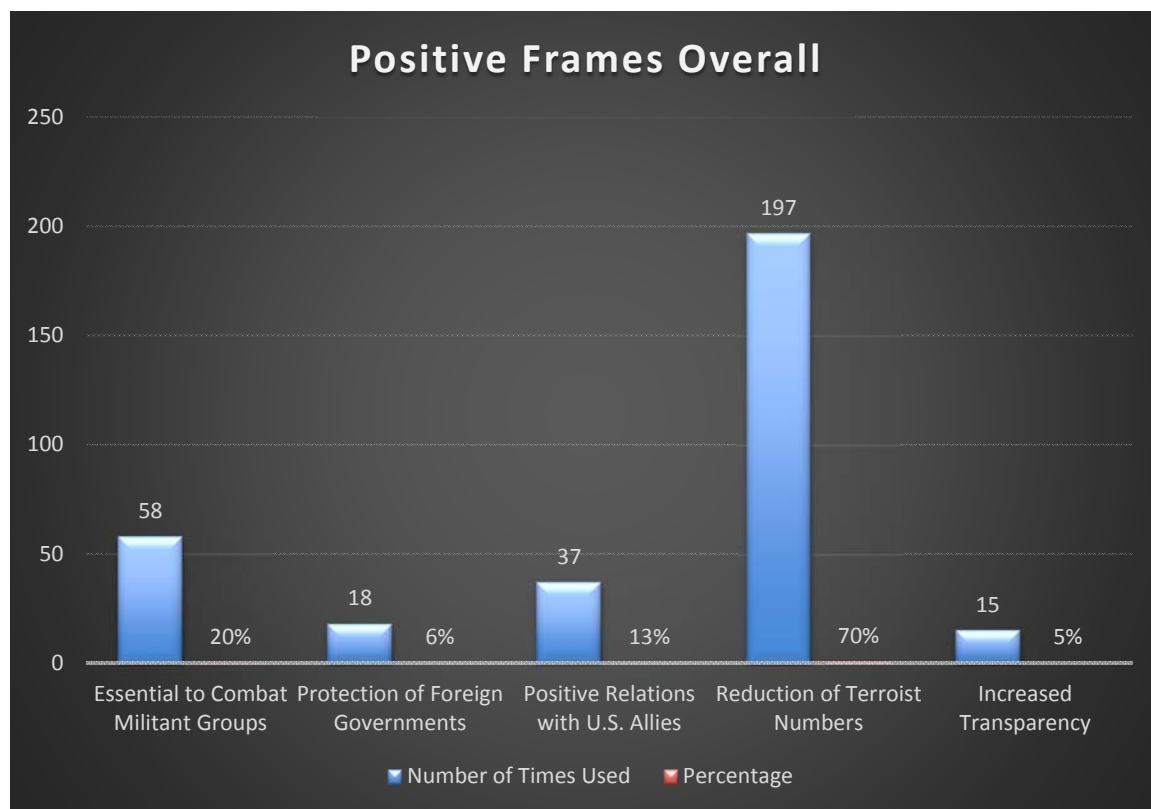
In this section the results of the content analysis will be provided. The findings on dominant frames found in AP coverage of drone strikes and news coverage of strikes in Pakistan and Yemen will be presented. The results will be presented in five sections: dominant frames in AP coverage, dominant frames in AP coverage from Pakistan, dominant frames in AP coverage from Yemen, AP and *New York Times* coverage of drone strikes in Pakistan, and AP and *New York Times* coverage of drone strikes in Yemen.

When looking at the dominant frames found in drone strike articles, there were several aspects taken into consideration. First, both the positive and negative aspects of the drone program in the articles were identified. Second, the byline, dateline, and date were noted. Lastly, the author of the article and the type of article it was were noted. All 283 articles that were coded took these factors into consideration as they were reviewed.

#### Positive Frames Overall

Overall, there were 325 positive aspects mentioned in the 283 AP articles. The most featured positive aspect was the “reduction of terrorist numbers.” This aspect was featured 197 times in the 283 articles. The “reduction of terrorist numbers” was featured in 70% of the articles. The next highest positive aspect was drone strikes being “essential to combat militant groups.” This aspect was used 58 times in the 283 and was found in

20% of the articles. “Positive relations with US allies” was featured 37 times in 283 articles. This frame was found in 13% of articles. The final aspects covered were the “protection of foreign governments” and “increased transparency.” The “protection of foreign governments” was used 18 times and was featured in 6% of the articles. “Increased transparency” was featured 15 times and found in 5% of articles. For graphical representation of the positive frames found in AP coverage see Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Positive Frames Overall

### Negative Frames Overall

Overall, there were 535 negative aspects mentioned in the 283 AP articles. The most featured negative aspect was “the killing of civilians.” This aspect was featured 119 times in the 283 articles. The “killing of civilians” was featured in 42% of the articles. The next highest negative aspect was “violation of the country's sovereignty.” This aspect was used 89 times in the 283 and was found in 31% of the articles. “Negative relations with US allies” were featured 84 times in 283 articles. This frame was found in 30 % of articles. “The legal issues surrounding the program” were featured 52 times and were found in 18% of the articles. “The targeting of American citizens” was featured 43 times and was found in 15% of articles. Notably, the negative frame of “increased hate of the United States” was featured 40 times and was present in 14% of the articles. For a full representation of the negative frames found in AP coverage see Figure 2.



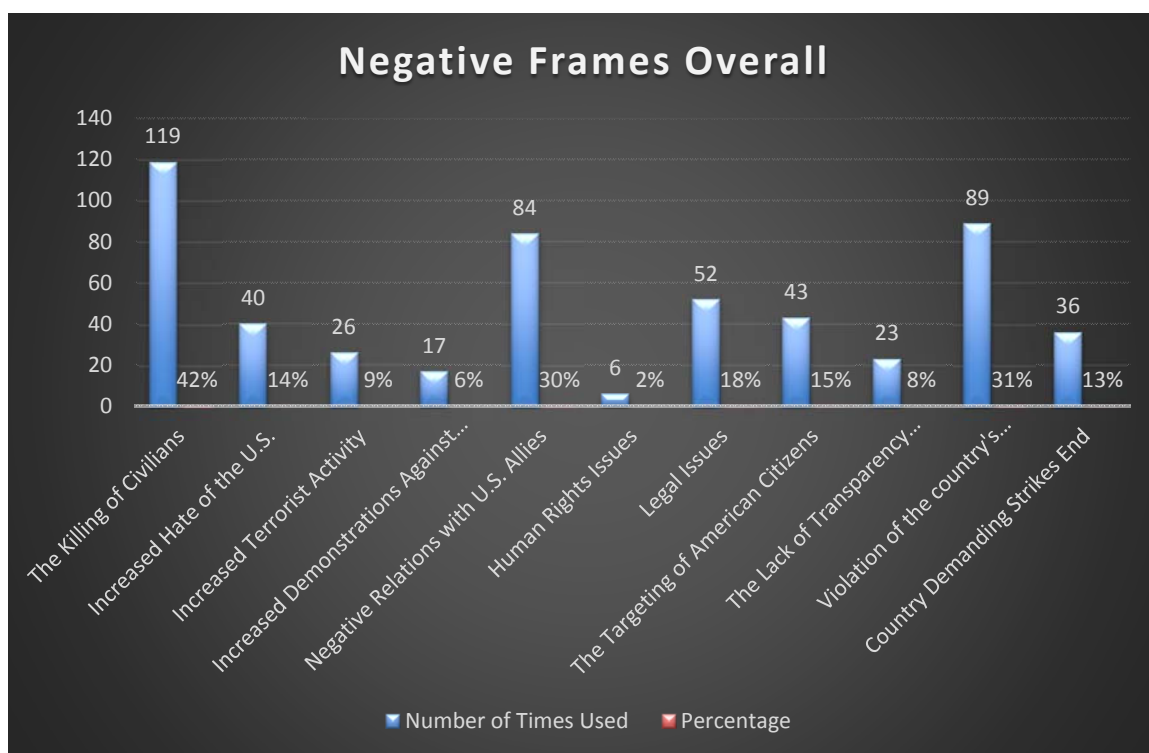


Figure 2. Negative Frames Overall

### Sources

Overall, there were 778 sources in the 283 AP articles. The most common source was an unnamed foreign official. Unnamed foreign officials were used 145 times in 283. They were used as sources in 51% of articles. The next highest total went to foreign government or official. A foreign government or official was used 124 times in 283 articles. They were used as sources in 44% of articles. The third highest total went to the other category. This category included think tanks, human rights groups, and any other source that wasn't listed. The other category was used 84 times in 283 articles. The other

group was used in 30% of articles. The next highest category was unnamed US officials. Unnamed US officials were used 79 times in 283 articles. Unnamed US Officials were used in 28% of articles. The final source that I will present is foreign citizens. Foreign citizens were used 56 times in 283 articles and were used in 20% of the articles. For a full representation of the sources found in AP coverage see Figure 3.

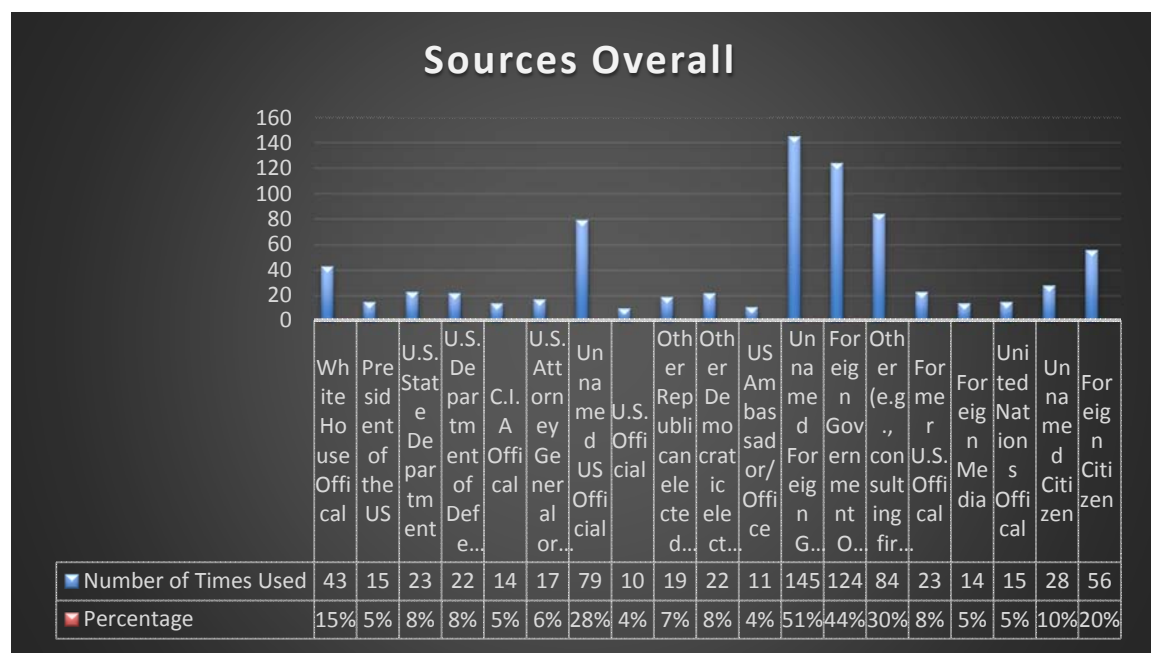
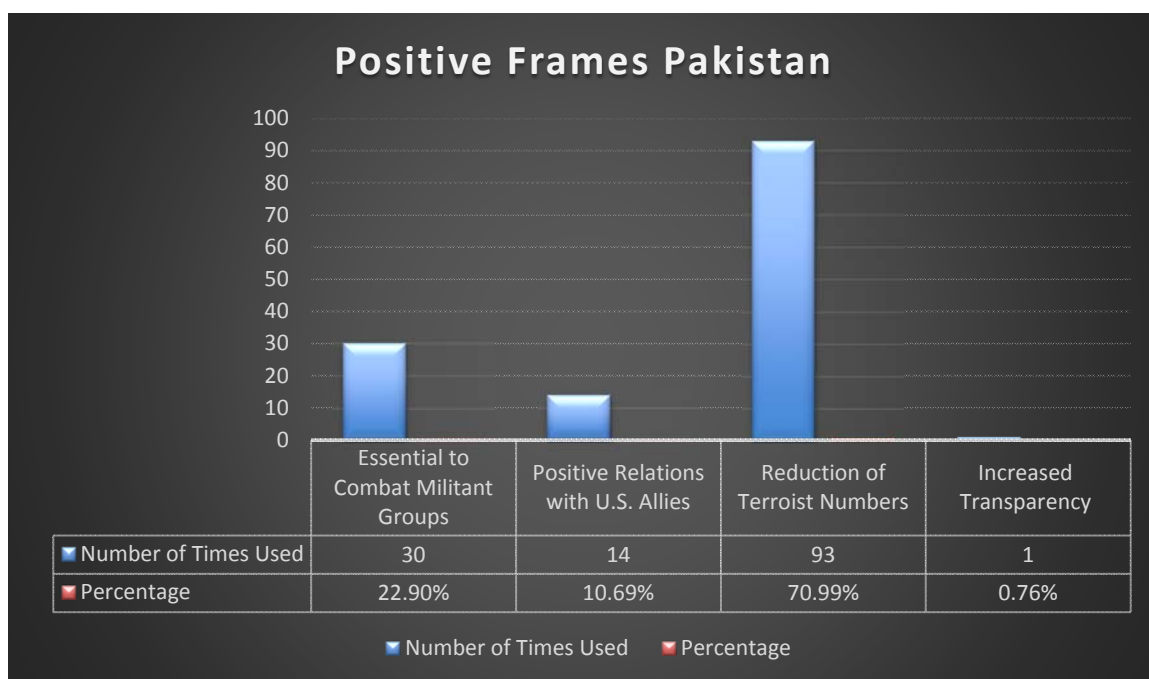


Figure 3. Sources Overall

### Positive Frames: Pakistan

When coding the drone strike articles in The Associated Press, the articles were separated by dateline. All of the articles with datelines from Pakistan were put together and the positive aspects of the CIA drone program were noted. The most common positive aspect featured in the Pakistan articles was the “reduction of terrorist numbers” which was used 93 times in 131 articles. The “reduction of terrorist numbers” was used in 70% of Pakistan articles. The next most common positive aspect was “essential to combat militant groups.” This aspect was used 30 times in 131 articles. This aspect was used in 22% of Pakistan articles. The final aspect I will cover is “positive relations with U.S allies” which were used 14 times in 131 articles. “Positive relations with US allies” was used 10% of the time. For a full list of the positive frames in AP coverage from Pakistan see Figure 4.



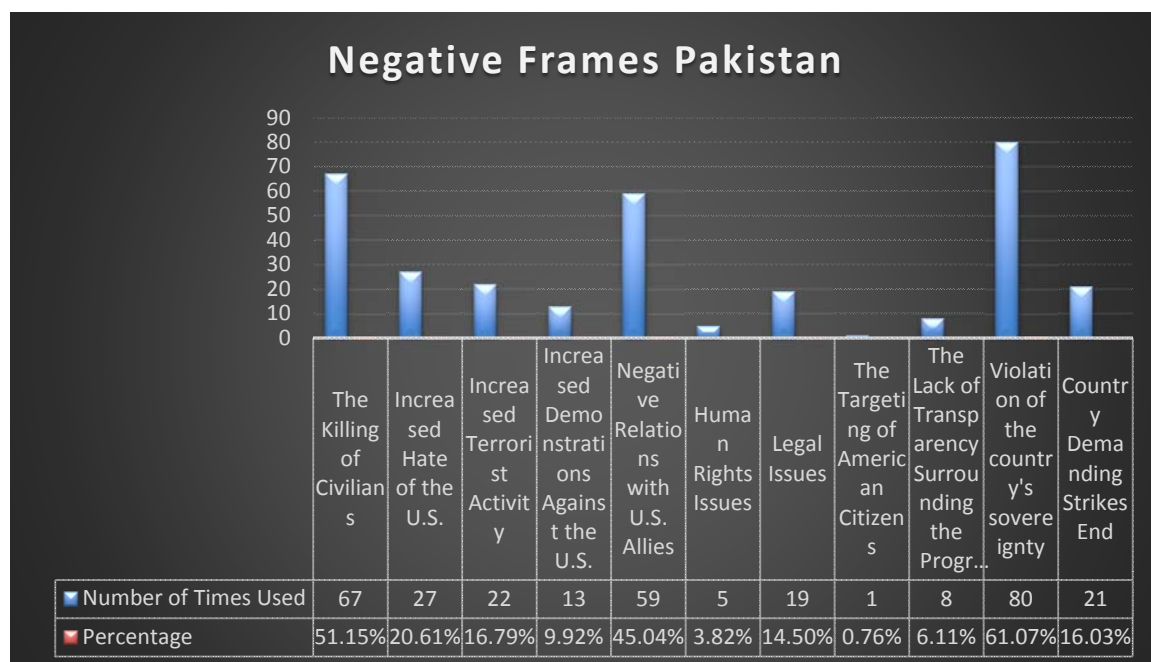
*Figure 4. Positive Frames Pakistan*

#### Negative Frames: Pakistan

All of the articles with datelines from Pakistan were put together and the negative aspects of the CIA drone program were noted. The most common negative aspect featured in the Pakistan articles was “violation of a country’s sovereignty” which was used 80 times in 131 articles. This frame was present in 61% of Pakistan articles. The second most common negative frame was “the killing on civilians.” “The killing of civilians” was mentioned 67 times in 131 articles. “The killing of civilians” was featured in 51% of Pakistan articles. The third most common negative frame was “negative relations with US allies.” “Negative relations with US allies” were used 59 times in 131

articles. “Negative relations with US allies” were used in 45% of Pakistan articles. The final negative aspect that I will highlight is “increased hate of the United States.”

“Increased hate of the US” was used 27 times in 131 articles. It was used in 20% of Pakistan Articles. For a full list of the negative frames in AP coverage from Pakistan, see Figure 5.



*Figure 5. Negative Frames Pakistan*

### Sources: Pakistan

All of the articles with datelines from Pakistan were put together and the sources of the article were noted. The most common source in the articles from Pakistan was an unnamed foreign official. An unnamed foreign official was used 85 times in 131 articles. Unnamed foreign officials were used in 64% of articles from Pakistan. The second most used source was a foreign government official or office. A Foreign government official or office was used 78 times in 131 articles. It was used in 59 % of articles from Pakistan. The third most used source was a foreign citizen. Foreign citizens were used 43 times in 131 articles. They were used 32% of the time. The final source that will be highlighted is the other category. This category was used 34 times in 131 articles. The other category was used in 25% of articles from Pakistan. For a full list of the sources found in AP coverage from Pakistan see Figure 6.

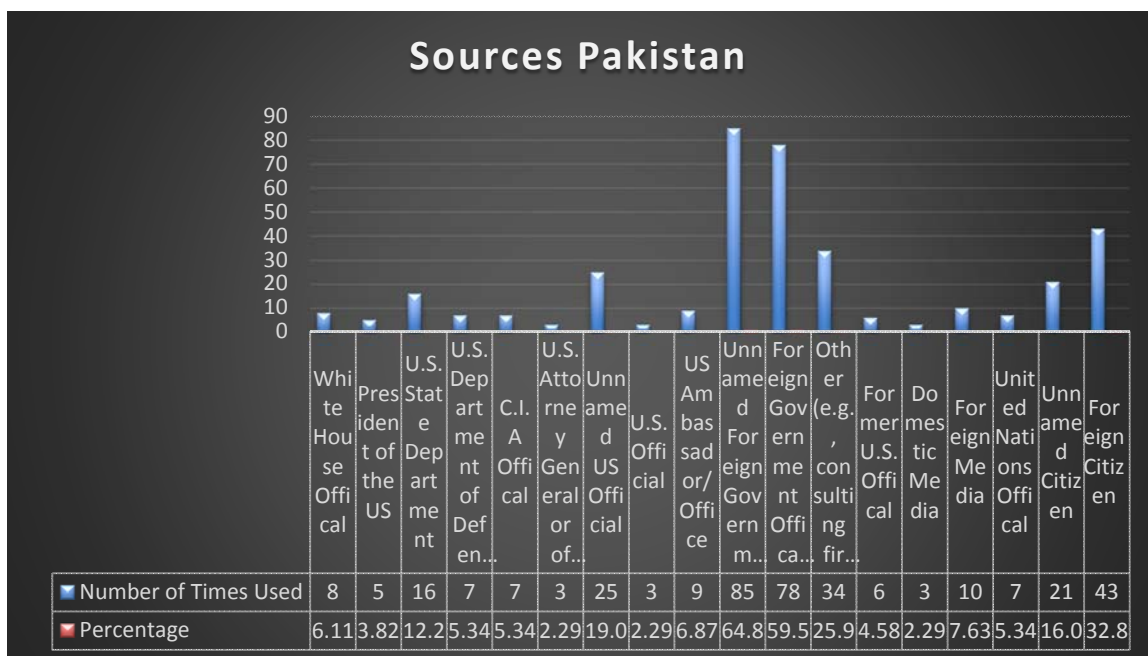
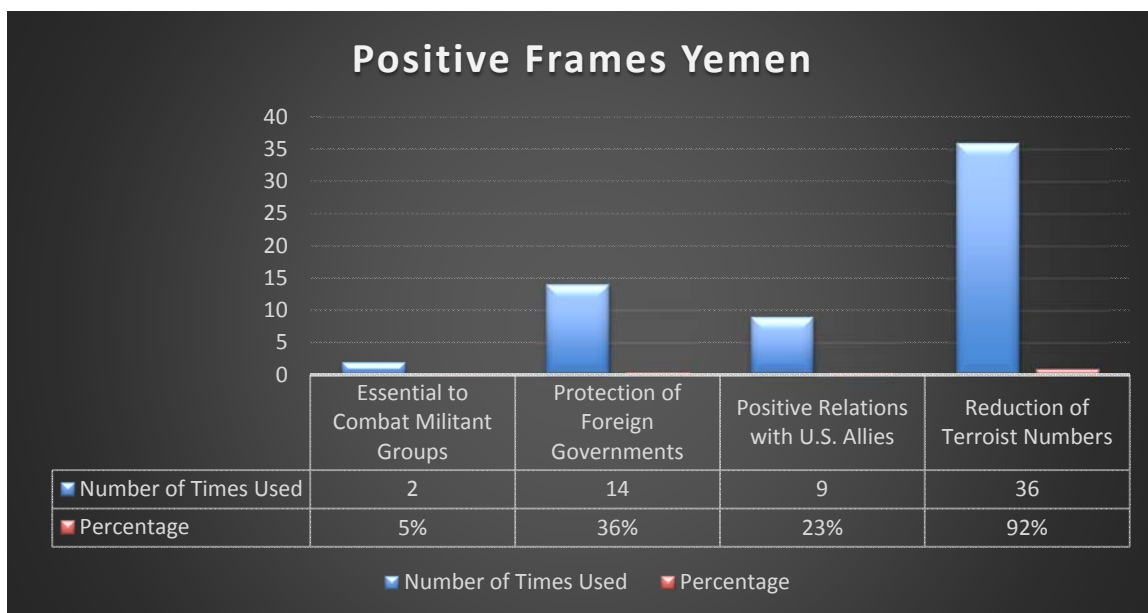


Figure 6. Sources Pakistan

### Positive Frames: Yemen

All of the articles with datelines from Yemen were put together and the positive aspects of the CIA drone program were noted. The most common positive aspect featured in the Yemen articles was the “reduction of terrorist numbers.” “The reduction of terrorist numbers” was used 36 times in 39 articles. “The reduction of terrorist numbers” was used in 92% of articles from Yemen. The second most used positive frame was the “protection of foreign governments.” “The protection of foreign governments” was used in 14 times in 39 articles. “Protection of foreign governments” was used in 36% of stories from Yemen. The third most used positive frame was “positive relations with US allies.” “Positive relations with US allies” were used 9 times

in 39 articles. “Positive relations with US allies” were used in 23% of articles from Yemen. For a full list of positive frames found in AP coverage from Yemen see Figure 7.



*Figure 7. Positive Frames Yemen*

### Negative Frames: Yemen

All of the articles with datelines from Yemen were put together and the negative aspects of the CIA drone program were noted. The most common negative aspect featured in the Yemen articles was “the killing of civilians.” “The killing of civilians” was used 8 times in 39 articles and was used in 21% of articles from Yemen. The second



most common negative aspect featured in Yemen articles was “the targeting of American citizens.” “The targeting of American citizens” was used 6 times in 38 articles. “The targeting of American citizens” was found in 15% of articles from Yemen. The last negative frame that will be highlighted is “increased hate of the United States.” “Increased hate of the US” was used 4 times in 39 articles. It was used in 10% of articles from Yemen. For a full list of negative aspects of the drone program found in AP coverage from Yemen see Figure 8.

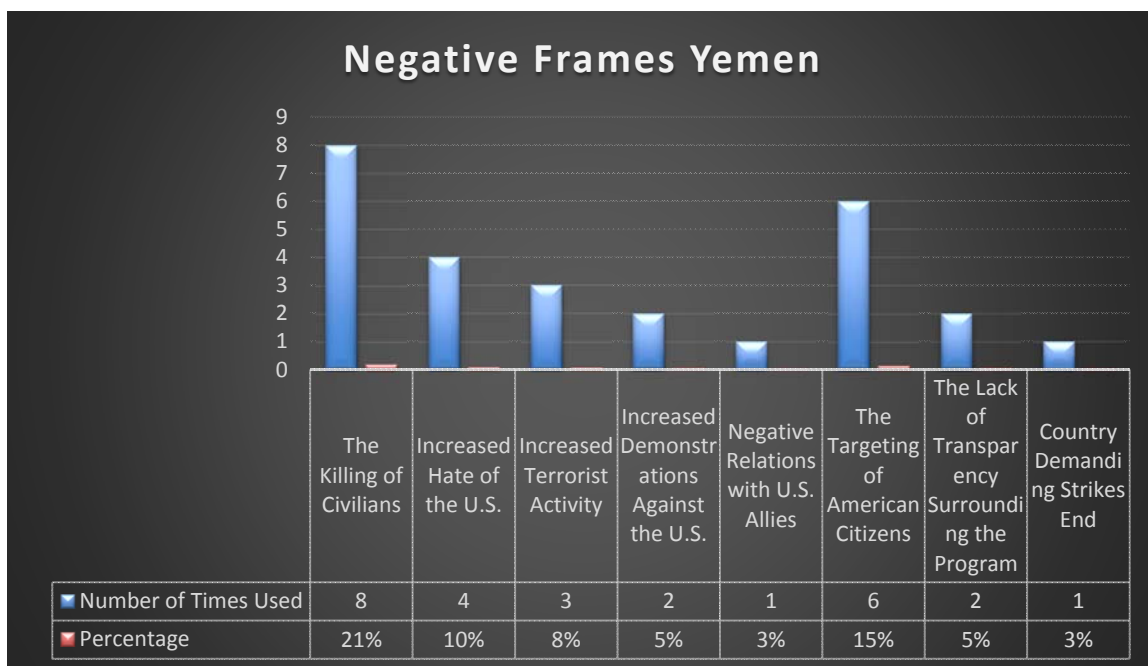


Figure 8. Negative Frames Yemen

### Sources: Yemen

All of the articles with datelines from Yemen were put together and the sources of the article were noted. The most common source in the articles from Yemen were unnamed foreign officials. Unnamed foreign officials were used 35 times in 39 articles. Unnamed officials were used in 90% of articles from Yemen. The second most common source from Yemen was a foreign government official or office. A foreign government official or office was used 22 times in 39 articles. A foreign government official or office was used in 56% of articles from Yemen. The final source that will be highlighted is an unnamed US official. Unnamed US officials were used 11 times in 39 articles. They were used in 28% of articles from Yemen. For a full list of the sources found in AP coverage from Yemen see Figure 9.

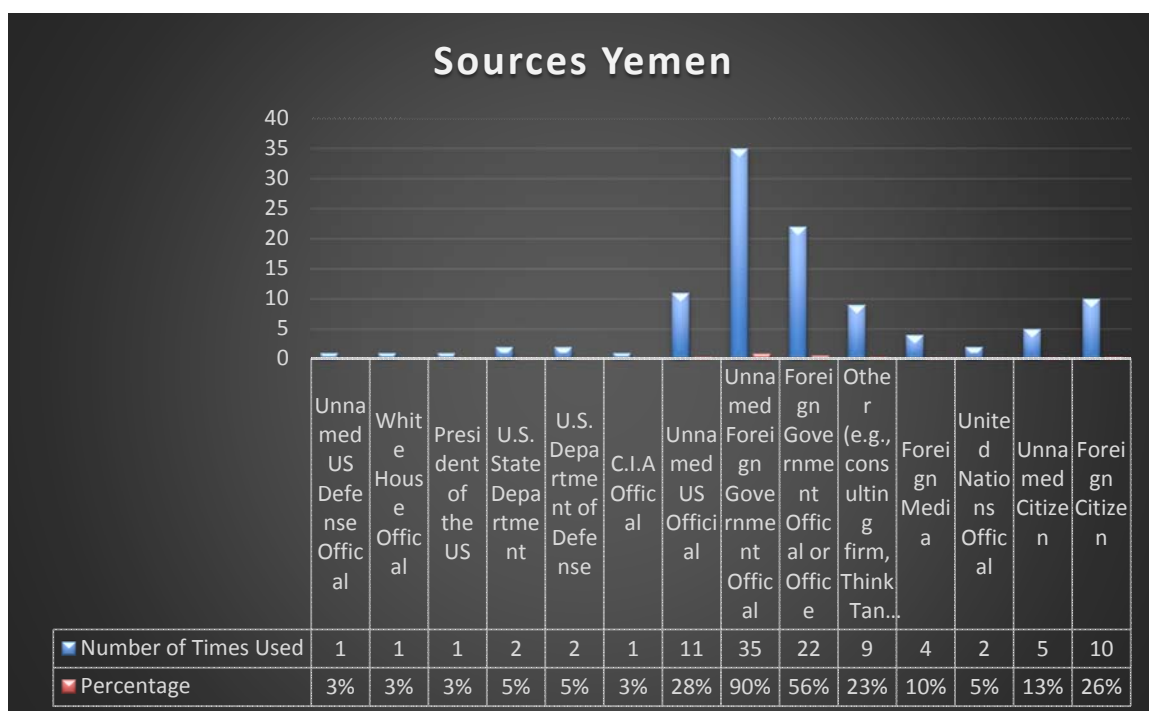


Figure 9. Sources Yemen

### CIA Strikes in Pakistan

A list of CIA drone strikes in Pakistan from 2011 to 2013 was obtained from The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. Each drone strike that took place in 2013, 2012, and 2011 was analyzed to see if the Associated Press or the *New York Times* had a story about it. In 2013 The Bureau of Investigative Journalism recorded 27 strikes in Pakistan. The Associated Press had stories about 17 of those 27 strikes. The Associated Press covered 63% of the strikes in 2013. The *New York Times* had stories about 15 of 27 strikes. The *New York Times* covered 56% of the drone strikes in Pakistan in 2013. In 2012 The Bureau of Investigative Journalism recorded 47 strikes in Pakistan. In 2012 the

Associated Press covered 27 out of 47 strikes. The AP covered 57% of the strikes that took place in Pakistan in 2012. In 2012 the *New York Times* covered 7 of the 47 strikes that took place in Pakistan. It covered just 15% of the drone strikes that took place in Pakistan in 2012. In 2011 the Bureau of Investigative Journalism recorded 74 strikes in Pakistan. The Associated Press covered 30 of the 74 strikes from 2011. The Associated press covered 41% of the drone strikes that took place in Pakistan in 2011. The *New York Times* covered 13 out of 74 strikes in 2011. It covered just 18% of the strikes that took place in 2011 in Pakistan.

Table 1

*Totals Pakistan*

2013 Totals	
Total Strikes Reported by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism	27
NY Times Reported Strikes	15
Percentage Covered by NY Times	56%
AP Reported Strikes	17
Percentage Covered by AP	63%
2012 Totals	
Total Strikes Reported by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism	47
NY Times Reported Strikes	7
Percentage Covered by NY Times	15%
AP Reported Strikes	27
Percentage Covered by AP	57%
2011 Totals	
Total Strikes Reported by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism	74
NY Times Reported Strikes	13
Percentage Covered by NY Times	16%
AP Reported Strikes	30
Percentage Covered by AP	41%

### CIA Strikes in Yemen

A list of CIA drone strikes in Yemen from 2011 to 2013 was obtained from The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. Each drone strike that took place in 2013, 2012, and 2011 was looked at to see if the Associated Press or the *New York Times* had a story about it. In 2013, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism recorded 37 strikes in Yemen. The Associated Press had stories about 18 of those 37 strikes. The Associated Press covered 49% of the drone strikes that took place in Yemen in 2013. The *New York Times* had stories about 5 of the 37 strikes. It only covered 14% of the strikes that took place in 2013. In 2012 The Bureau of Investigative Journalism recorded 58 strikes in Yemen. The Associated Press covered 42 of the 58 strikes that took place. The Associated Press covered 72% of the drone strikes that took place in 2012. The *New York Times* covered 4 out of 58 strikes in Yemen. It covered 7% of the strikes that took place in 2012 in Yemen. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism recorded 6 strikes in 2011. The Associated Press covered 5 of the 6 strikes in 2011. The Associated Press covered 83% of the strikes that took place in Yemen in 2011. The *New York Times* covered 2 out of the 6 strikes in 2011. The *Times* covered 33% of the strikes that took place in 2011.

Table 2

*Totals Yemen*

2013 Totals	
Total Strikes Reported by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism	37
NY Times Reported Strikes	5
Percentage Covered by NY Times	14%
AP Reported Strikes	18
Percentage Covered by AP	49%
2012 Totals	
Total Strikes Reported by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism	58
NY Times Reported Strikes	4
Percentage Covered by NY Times	7%
AP Reported Strikes	42
Percentage Covered by AP	72%
2011 Totals	
Total Strikes Reported by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism	6
NY Times Reported Strikes	2
Percentage Covered by NY Times	33%
AP Reported Strikes	5
Percentage Covered by AP	83%

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Positive Aspects Overall

The positive aspects of the drone program present in Associated Press coverage were both surprising and not surprising. The “reduction of terrorist numbers” was the most common positive frame found in AP coverage. The “reduction of terrorist numbers” frame was used in 70% of the articles and is by far the most common frame found in AP coverage. This fact is not surprising because the “reduction of terrorist numbers” is one of the main benefits of the unmanned drone program, the number one purpose of the program, and the number one justification used by the government. It allows the United States to kill militants without putting soldiers in danger and because of this benefit, it is not surprising that it is the most common frame. The second most common positive frame is that it is “essential to combat militant groups,” which was found in 58 out of 283 articles or in 20% of the articles. The third most common positive frame is “positive relations with US allies,” which was used 37 times in 283 articles or 13% of the time. This is a 57% drop from the most common frame the “reduction of terrorist numbers.” Another surprising factor is that after “positive relations with US allies” there is not a positive aspect that is used over 20 times or 7%. This result is especially surprising because foreign stories are generally constructed in ways that agree with US foreign policy (Graber, 2006). The Obama administration has been clear that the president has the power to carry out drone strikes under the post-September 11 legislation,



Authorization for Use of Military Force. The administration has stated that this legislation gives the president the power to target and kill Al Qaeda members away from declared war zones even if they are American citizens (“Drone Strikes,” 2013). Like much other post-September 11 legislation, this program does not require judicial supervision or public accountability. This firm position of the United States government on drone strikes would lead to coverage being developed that agrees with this policy, and at first glance it seems like this is not the case, but after analyzing the data it can be seen that news coverage is indirectly supporting foreign policy. The high frequency usage of the “reduction of terrorist numbers” outweighs any other negative frame as the “reduction of terrorist numbers” is used 197 times compared to 119 times for the “killing of civilians.” This usage is important because the “reduction of terrorist numbers” is the main goal of the program and thus its usage supports the drone program. Its usage also means that the US government is winning the publicity war here in the United States by getting the press to tout the success of the program. Next, the different usage of positive frames by stories from Pakistan and Yemen will be discussed.

The differences between the positive frames used in Associated Press coverage of drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen were pretty similar. The use of “the reduction of terrorist numbers” was high in both countries and three out of the four positive frames used were the same. However, there are some slight differences that are worth noting. First, the usage of the frame “essential to combat militant groups” was much higher in Pakistan than it was in Yemen. The reason for this difference is obvious-drone strikes are much more unpopular in Pakistan than they are in Yemen. In Pakistan the government

regularly denounces drone strikes that take place in their country and in Yemen the government has been said to sign off on each strike that takes place. The fact that strikes are so unpopular leads the United States government to defend the value of these strikes, hence why we see “essential to combat militant groups” being used more in Pakistan than Yemen. Another difference is the amount of times that the “positive relations with US Allies” frame occurs. It is not surprising to see this positive frame used more in Yemen than in Pakistan because drone strikes started off with the blessing of the Pakistan government, but that support has changed considerably with Pakistan now denouncing the strikes. The lone positive frame that was different for each country was “increased transparency” in Pakistan and “protection of foreign governments” in Yemen. The usage of “increased transparency” in Pakistan is not significant because it was only used one time or in .76% of the articles. The difference in Yemen can be easily explained by the relationship that it has with the United States. In 2011, Yemen experienced some political upheaval, which allowed militants to take over large portions of land and led to longtime leader, Ali Abdullah Saleh, being replaced by vice president Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi in February of 2012. This change of power created a new relationship with the United States government (Kasinof, 2012). This new relationship meant increased cooperation between the two governments. The United States government helped Yemen reclaim the large portions of land lost during the previous year by sharing intelligence, performing air, and drone strikes. This assistance created a strong bond between the United States and Yemen and led to the usage of “protection of foreign governments” because the

United States was assisting in the protection of Yemen. The negative frames found in Associated Press coverage will be discussed next.

### Negative Aspects Overall

The amount and usage of negative frames in Associated Press coverage was surprising. As mentioned earlier American news coverage of foreign events usually agrees with US foreign policy and coverage of drone strikes is no different. While negative frames are found to be much more prevalent in AP coverage (535 negative frames compared to 325 positive), the individual frames that are most used are not highlighting the biggest pitfalls of the program. When looking at the program the biggest disadvantages would be the drone strikes caused increased hate of the US and the attack caused increased terrorist attacks. These two frames directly contradict the expressed purpose of the program to reduce the amount of terrorists globally that can attack the United States. AP stories only featured “increased hate of the US” 40 times or 14% of the time and “increased terrorist activity” 26 times or 9%. These numbers are especially low compared to the 197 times the “reduction of terrorist numbers” was used. If AP coverage had focused more on these frames perhaps public opinion of the program would be different. There was also a lot more diversity in the number of negative frames. There were 11 negative frames compared to 5 positive frames. The large distribution of negative frames is problematic because it does not present a strong central argument to combat the “reduction of terrorist numbers” frame. We saw that most common negative frame “the killing of civilians” being used in 42% of articles, followed by “violation of

the country's sovereignty" being used in 31% of articles, and "negative relations with US allies" being used in 30% of articles. There are another four negative frames that are used at least 10% of the time. This consistency shows that the Associated Press is not going to cover the biggest disadvantages of drone strikes in any frequency, which allows AP coverage to show more support than resistance to US foreign policy. If the Associated Press was going to cover drone strikes in a way that disagrees with US foreign policy we would see a lot more usage of the negative frames that illustrate that the disadvantages of the program outweigh the benefits. The large distribution of the negative frames and the focused distribution of the positive frames help explain why public support of drone strikes is high. A March 2013 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 61% of Americans supported the use of drones (Drake, 2013). While support of the use of drones was high there was some concern over the number of civilians that were being killed. According to a poll taken in February 2013, 53% of those polled said they were "very" concerned about whether drone strikes put the lives of civilians in danger (Drake, 2013). Even more surprising 42% of those who approved of the use of drones said they were very concerned the attacks risked lives of innocent civilians. These findings are somewhat expected from the data collected. The most common negative frame was the "killing of civilians" and because of the large reach of the AP it could have contributed to the killing of civilians to be on the public's radar. Another interesting finding from the February survey was that only 26% of respondents said that drone strikes would damage America's reputation in the world and only 31% of respondents said that they were concerned about whether the attacks were legal. These results are not surprising because

the number of a negative frames that suggested decline of America's reputation such as "increased hate of the US," "increased terrorist activity," and "negative relations with US allies" is low in comparison to danger to civilians. This number could be useful in explaining why the drone program enjoys such high popularity. Because news coverage doesn't cover the biggest disadvantages of the program the American people are not concerned with those aspects of the program. It is also surprising because there were a large number of negative frames used to question the legality of drone strikes such as "legal issues" which were used 18% of the time and "violation of the country's sovereignty" which was used 31% of the time. It is interesting that these negative frames did not cause people to become more concerned about the legality of drone strikes. Next, the different usage of negative frames by stories from Pakistan and Yemen will be discussed.

The number and types of the negative frames used in AP coverage in Pakistan and Yemen were significantly different. The results showed that negative frames were much more common in stories from Pakistan than from Yemen. The most common negative frame used in Pakistan was "violation of the county's sovereignty" which was used 61% of the time; compare this to the most common negative frame from Yemen which was the "killing of civilians" which was used in 21% of articles. There is a significant gap between the most common negative frames. The amount of negative frames is much greater in Pakistan with 322 total negative frames in 131 articles compared to 27 total negative frames in 39 stories in Yemen. These results can once again be explained by the differences in the popularity of drone strikes in each country. Drone strikes are greatly

unpopular in Pakistan with both the populace and the government, while strikes in Yemen are unpopular with the populace but popular with the government, which helps explain why negative frames are used significantly more often in Pakistan than in Yemen. This factor also explains why there was more of a variety of negative frames used in Pakistan as compared to Yemen with Pakistan having 11 different negative frames compared to 8 in Yemen. Another issue is that drone strikes in Pakistan received much more coverage than strikes in Yemen with strikes in Pakistan being covered 131 times compared to 39 times for Yemen. It must be noted that the CIA strikes have been going on since 2004 in Pakistan and since 2011 in Yemen. Next, the sources in Associated Press coverage of drone strikes are discussed.

### Sources

The coding of the sources in Associated Press coverage of drone strikes provided insight into how these stories gain legitimacy. The most used source was an unnamed foreign government official, which was used 145 times or 51% of the time. The second most common source was a foreign government official or office, which was used 124 times or 44% of the time. The third highest was the other category which consisted of consulting firms, think tanks, and any other group that might be commenting on drone strikes which was used 30% of the time. The fourth highest was unnamed US officials who were used 28% of the time. Three of these sources are not surprising. With the secretive nature of the drone program few government officials are willing to talk about drone strikes. Officials in the United States are concerned about being charged under the

Espionage Act, so they are usually not willing to be publicly quoted for a story about drone strikes. The same is usually true for government officials in countries where strikes take place. Low-level officials are generally not allowed to talk to the media about individual strikes, so these officials are often reluctant to be quoted publicly. The other category that is high on the list is no surprise because these organizations are usually the only reliable source of information about the drone program and individual strikes. The surprise on this list is the high number of foreign government officials or offices that were used as sources. There has been an increase in this type of communication in Pakistan and Yemen, but for different reasons in each country. In Pakistan the government has become more vocal about drone strikes because the populace and the government has started to sour on drone strikes. The government of Pakistan is now asking for drone strikes to end in Pakistan because of the overwhelming disapproval of them in the public and the fact that the government feels like drone strikes have become counterproductive because the strikes create more militants than they kill. In Yemen the government has become more vocal about drone strikes after the US helped the government reclaim large portions of Yemen that were taken over by militants during the protests that removed longtime leader of Yemen Ali Abdullah Saleh in February of 2012 (Kasinof, 2012). Another interesting result is the large number of foreign citizens who were used as sources. Both in Pakistan and Yemen, people have been killed for aiding the United States in drone strikes. This fact usually makes individuals reluctant to talk to reporters about drone strikes because of the fear of retaliation by militants. One explanation for this result could be that people are so strongly against drone strikes that

they will take any opportunity to speak out against them. Another explanation could be that individuals were more open to talking to local reporters than foreign journalists. The differences in the sources that were used in Pakistan and Yemen will be discussed next.

The sources used in Associated Press coverage of drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen were similar. In both Pakistan and Yemen the top three sources by usage were unnamed foreign government official, foreign government official or office, and foreign citizen. There were differences in the total number of sources used with Pakistan having 363 total sources in 131 articles compared to 106 total sources in 39 stories. There are several possible explanations for these results. First, there have simply been more strikes in Pakistan, which means more stories and which means more sources. The second possible explanation is because drone strikes are so unpopular in Pakistan more individuals are willing to talk about drone strikes with reporters. While the first explanation is the more probable explanation either could be true in this instance.

#### Associated Press Coverage of CIA Drone Strikes in Pakistan and Yemen

Associated Press coverage of drone strikes was frequent but still fell short of covering every strike that took place in Pakistan and Yemen. The AP covered 50% of the drone strikes that took place in Pakistan between 2011 and 2013 and 64% of the strikes that took place in Yemen between 2011 and 2013. The Associated Press coverage of drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen is much more complete than the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* only covered 11% of the drone strikes in Yemen and 24% of the strikes in Pakistan during the same time frame. The Associated Press was able to cover



more strikes because of a number of advantages that it has over other news organizations such as the *New York Times*.

One advantage that the AP has is the fact that it has two foreign bureaus in Pakistan, in Islamabad and Karachi. While the AP doesn't have a foreign bureau in Yemen, it does have one in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Although not in Yemen, Saudi Arabia is a good location for the AP because the CIA flies their drones out of a remote airstrip in Saudi Arabia. Another advantage that the AP has in covering drone strikes is the fact that it has foreign members that give it access to local reporters in Pakistan and Yemen. These local reporters are going to have the best chances of being able to cover drone strikes because they are familiar with the geography and local customs of the areas where the drone strikes are taking place. Another advantage that the AP has is its massive size. AP's large size allows it to allot more resources towards international news, which is extremely beneficial in the case of drone strikes. Another advantage is the fact that it has so many members. Thus, the AP says that on any given day half of the world's population sees AP content. This fact allows the AP to have unmatched reach when it comes to the number of people reading their stories.

However, with all the advantages that the AP has there are some disadvantages that it must overcome. One disadvantage is the fact that drone strikes are notoriously difficult to cover because the locations where they take place are often remote and difficult to get to and the United States government releases little information about drone strikes let alone individual strikes. Another disadvantage is that it is hard to get

people to talk about drone strikes. Government officials are not allowed to talk to the media about the strikes and risk prosecution if they are found to have disclosed information about the program. The local populace is also hesitant to discuss drone strikes with anyone, let alone reporters. The local people are hesitant to discuss drone strikes because they fear if they speak out in favor of drone strikes that there might be retribution from the militant groups. This fear is especially great because militant groups often kill individuals who have been known to aid in drone strikes. Another big disadvantage that the AP has is the fact that it does not deliver content directly to consumers of news. The AP delivers its content other news organizations and those organizations deliver the content to the consumers of news. This is problematic because the AP could cover every drone strike and it wouldn't do any good if no news organizations picked it up. It would be tough to get news organizations to pick up stories about every strike because the drone strike program is not of particular importance to the American people. Perhaps the biggest disadvantage that faces the AP is the economic model of the press. The AP, like many other organizations, is driven by minimizing costs and maximizing profits, which isn't conducive to high quality coverage of topics such as CIA drone strikes. While the AP has some disadvantages, the advantages can outweigh the disadvantages. The AP should utilize their advantages to do a better job of covering drone strikes by covering nearly all of the strikes that take place. A number of suggestions could be made on how this problem could be remedied, but most of them are highly unlikely to be picked up by the AP because of the problems that are associated with for-profit journalism. This being said the current coverage of CIA drone strikes

illustrates the limits of for-profit journalism. If drone strikes is a topic that is unable to be covered by private media, perhaps it is a job for public broadcasting. However, there is no guarantee that public broadcasting would fare any better than private media.

### Press Theory Implications

The results and discussion of this study have shown that there is room for improvement in the news media in the United States. Many of these issues have been identified by Robert Entman in his book *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics* (1989). In this book Entman lays out what kind of news coverage the United States needs for informed citizens. He then lays out how this is not the case in the current media landscape. One major problem he identifies is the economics of the news business. He states that the current economic model encourages news organizations to minimize costs and generate growing profit. He goes on to state how this economic model is reducing the ability of journalists to achieve free press ideals. The problem of press coverage of drone strikes is a perfect opportunity to start the debate about increased funding for public broadcasting and support for the move to post-corporate ownership of news media. Public broadcasting does not exist in the same economic area as private businesses. Public broadcasters are not trying to minimize costs and generate profit. If public broadcasting was better funded so that it could compete with private business it would then cause private business to try to keep up, which would help improve press quality overall. These results extend far beyond the economic system in which the press operates.

The results and discussion of this paper also have implication for press theory in the United States. For many years scholars have classified the United States as belonging to the social responsibility theory of the press. Under this model the press has a moral obligation to provide citizens with a sufficient amount of information so that citizens can make informed decisions. As we have seen this has not been put in practice. The economic environment has trumped this moral obligation and the drive for profits has taken over. Another important aspect of this theory is the idea that the marketplace will be self-correcting. This is another idea that we have not seen play in reality. The news media ownership has become so concentrated that consumers are not able to go to another source of media when they are unhappy with poor coverage because all coverage is very similar.

With these problems associated with the social responsibility theory of press it's time to talk about moving toward the democratic socialist theory of the press. Under this theory the government plays a much more important role in the press. Under this theory the government is responsible for ensuring that citizens have the ability to use the press and to promote and preserve media plurality. Under this theory Picard (1985) envisioned ownership of news media to be in the hands of nonprofit corporations and journalist operated cooperative. He thought that the news media should be thought of as a public utility that is used for the distribution of the people's aspirations, ideas, praise and criticism of the state and society. Perhaps moving toward the democratic socialist theory of the press is the answer to increasing press quality and press freedom in the United States.

Scholars have suggested that the news media environment needs to change if high quality journalism is to thrive. Some of the most notable proponents of this change are Robert McChesney and John Nichols. They argue that press ownership needs to move towards the post-corporate ownership model. Under this model, news organizations would be owned by non-corporate entities. Their suggestions are the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the L3C Low-Profit Limited Liability organization, and worker cooperatives. Several papers already operate under these models. The UK's *The Guardian*, one of the most respected papers in the world, currently operates under a permanent limited company (McChesney & Nichols, 2010). The *St. Petersburg Times*, a top paper in the US, is run by the nonprofit Poynter Institute. These papers provide us with concrete examples of successful post-corporate models of newspaper ownership. These post-corporate models of ownership will allow the media landscape to transition from the social responsibility theory of the press to the democratic socialist theory of the press. Changing the ownership model of the press is just the first step in moving toward the democratic socialist theory of press. Another important step will be an increased role by the government. This increased role of the government is essential to the democratic socialist theory of the press. While these two steps are not all that is needed to transition to the democratic socialist theory of the press, they are the first steps in the right direction.

### Conclusion and Implications

The results of this study have revealed what frames the Associated Press tends to use when covering drone strikes and how often these frames are used. It has also revealed what types of sources are used when constructing these articles. The results of the study show a troubling pattern in AP coverage. First, the AP is not covering drone strikes completely, which underrepresents what is actually happening. Second, the fact that the biggest benefit of the drone program is the most common frame is troubling. While the AP does offer criticism of the program, it does not have the same impact and this impact can be seen in public opinion surveys. These results are not encouraging because we see the AP overall being quite supportive of United States foreign policy. The AP could do a number of things to improve its coverage of drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen. The AP could provide much more complete coverage of drone strikes. Complete coverage would help accurately represent what is happening. Another thing is the AP could do a better job of representing the biggest disadvantage of the drone program in showing that it is creating more terrorists than it is removing. The results of the framing analysis information could affect what we know about framing. Perhaps we cannot always accurately predict public opinion from the framing of news coverage, and that perhaps the salience of individual frames is more important than whether the frame seems to be objectively positive or negative.

The Associated Press has done a passable job of covering the actual strikes that take place in Pakistan and Yemen. The AP covered 50% of all the drone strikes that took

place in Pakistan between 2011 and 2013 and covered 64% of all the drone strikes that took place in Yemen between 2011 and 2013. These numbers are encouraging in comparison to the low percentage covered by the *New York Times*. However, this coverage is not good enough. We need to see additional coverage because it is the duty of the press to serve as a watchdog against the government. This duty is especially important with drone strikes because the United States government reveals very little information about the drone program, let alone about individual strikes that take place. Because of this factor someone needs to collect information about drone strikes, so that the American people can be informed on this topic, which is especially important when forming an opinion on drone strikes and when it comes time to vote for elected officials. The Associated Press is one of the news organizations best suited to cover this topic. The list of advantages that the AP has over other news organizations makes it an excellent candidate to cover almost every drone strike that takes place in Pakistan and Yemen. These strikes are an important international issue that deserves coverage. The Associated Press needs to step-up now and work towards not only covering all of the drone strikes that take place in Pakistan and Yemen, but towards making sure that the American people have access to these stories.

The results of this study have also made important contributions to press theory in the United States. The results have provided evidence that it is time to move away from the social responsibility theory of press to the democratic socialist theory of press. This study utilizes suggestions made by McChesney and Nichols on what is needed for this

transition to take place. This transition starts by moving towards the post-corporate ownership of news media.

#### Limitations/Further Research

There are several limitations to this research. The first limitation is the scope of the study. It would have been more effective to look at the entire history of AP coverage of drone strikes, which started with the first CIA strike in Pakistan in 2004. The inclusion of the entire history of coverage would have allowed a complete understanding of the way these stories are covered and how often these strikes are covered. It would have also given the complete picture of how this coverage has changed over time. Another limitation of this research was the search terms that were used. The search terms should have also included the term “missile strike.” This inclusion is very important because prior to 2009 this term was used to describe drone strikes and because this term was omitted the range of articles that were coded only went back to 2009. Additional studies should utilize the term “missile strike” when searching for drone strikes.

Further research on this topic could go in a number of different directions. The topic is still relatively new, so there is limited research that has been done on drone strikes. One area of further research would be to look at a much larger sample of news coverage. This goal could be achieved by looking at additional newspapers and looking at all of the news articles about drone strikes since the creation of lethal program under President Bush. With the discussion about public media, a study comparing PBS, NPR, and corporate news would aid in the debate of public versus private media. Additional



research needs to be done on how journalism can be fixed in our country and how it can be funded. One final area of research that I would suggest is looking at the coverage of US drone strike coverage by American news organization, and then comparing it to the US drone strike coverage by news organizations from another country, such as a country where the strikes are actually taking place.

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## APPENDIX

## CIA DRONE STRIKE CODING SCHEME

CIA Drone Strikes in the Associated Press, 2002-2013

Anthony Roth

**Sources Searched (LexisNexis)**

News Agency: Associated Press

**Where to find stories 1-349:** The story files (from 10/24/2002 to 12/06/2013) are available in one location.

- Stories 1-349 are the Associated Press news stories, and are in a very long single Adobe PDF document entitled The\_Associated\_Press2013-12-06\_10-12.PDF.

**General directions:**

1. Follow the coding questions below, and record the answers for each story in a new column (from left to right) on the Excel sheet. If for some reason the story turns out to have nothing to do with CIA Drone Strikes or If the story talks about drone strikes taking place in Iraq or Afghanistan they are most likely Department of Defense strikes and should not be coded (we've tried to weed all of these out), record A through C and leave the rest of the items blank. Otherwise, fill in all boxes
2. Code the story based on the relevant content. Some stories can be quite long, so just go to the section that deals with CIA Drone Strikes. All of the stories should have incidences of "Drone Strikes" or "Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now" highlighted or boldfaced.
3. As you need to add more blank columns at the right of the spreadsheet, just go to Insert, Columns. (You can also click on the arrows by the scroll bar at the bottom of the Excel window.)
4. As the spreadsheet grows to the right and you want to still see the coding key to the left, you can hide columns by highlighting selected columns, and then going to Format, Column, Hide. (You can reverse the process and select Unhide later to make the columns appear.)
5. Save often!

## CODING KEY

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- A. Story number (*These are numbered consecutively. Start at 1. Use the LexisNexis numbers 1-349*)
- B. Coder number (*Enter your coder number for this story. coder a number, 1 or 2.*)
  - 1. ()
  - 2. ()
- C. Story Date (*MO/DA/YR -- e.g., 12/25/07*)
- D. Byline
- E. Section
- F. Dateline
- G. General Frames—Positive Dimensions (*answer 1 for yes, 2 for no*)

### Positives

- 1. Increased Domestic Security
- 2. Increased Foreign Security
- 3. Increased Protection for U.S. Citizens Abroad
- 4. Increased Protection for U.S. Citizens At Home
- 5. Progress On the War on Terror
- 6. Protection of U.S. Assets Abroad
- 7. Protection of U.S. Businesses Abroad
- 8. Protection of Foreign Governments
- 9. Positive Diplomatic Relations With Foreign Countries
- 10. Positive Relations With U.S. Allies
- 11. Success of U.S. Foreign Policy
- 12. Protection of U.S. Troops Abroad
- 13. Reduction of Terrorist Numbers
- 14. Increased Public Support for the Program
- 15. Other (Please make sure to specify what is being used that doesn't show up on the list above)



H. General Frames—Negative Dimensions  
(answer 1 for yes, 2 for no)

Negatives

1. The Killing of Civilians
2. Increased Hate of the U.S.
3. Increased Terrorist Activity
4. Increase in Demonstrations against the U.S.
5. Increase in Hostilities against the U.S.
6. Negative Relations With Foreign Countries
7. Negative Relations with U.S. Allies
8. Decreased Security for U.S. Citizens Abroad
9. Decreased Security for U.S. Troops Abroad
10. Human Rights Issues
11. Legal Issues
12. The Targeting of American Citizens
13. The Monetary Cost of the Program
14. The Lack of Transparency Surrounding the Program
15. Failure of U.S. Foreign Policy
16. Opposition From the American People
17. violation of the country's sovereignty
18. Other (Please make sure to specify what is being used that doesn't show up on the list above)

I. Subjects

Quoted or mentioned as source in story

(answer 1 for yes, 2 for no)

1. U.S. Defense Official
2. U.S. State Department
3. U.S. Department of Defense
4. C.I.A Official
5. U.S. Attorney General or office
6. State Attorney General or office
7. Other Republican elected official(s)
8. Other Democratic elected official(s)
9. Other elected official(s) (no party given)
10. Foreign Government Official
11. Consultants (e.g., Control Risks consulting firm)
12. Former U.S. Official (e.g., David Iglesias)
13. Unnamed source
14. Foreign Media

15. United Nations Official
16. Foreign Citizen