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Participating in the construction of the sociotechnical imaginary  
of U.S. military drone technologies: A study of the politico-  
administrative narratives under Obama's presidency

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## **1. Introduction**

*“Drone strikes have been sold to the American public on the claim that they’re ‘precise’. But they are only as precise as the intelligence that feeds them. There is nothing precise about intelligence that results in the deaths of 28 unknown people, including women and children, for every ‘bad guy’ the US goes after”* (Gibson, n.d., as cited in Ackermann, 2014, para.8)

This was commended by Jennifer Gibson, member of Reprieve human rights group, after the publication of their new study of data about drone strikes. Gibson is the leader of Reprieve’s drone works in Pakistan. The results greatly contested the “precision” and “accuracy” of the U.S. drone program, thus it revealed that drone strikes kill vastly more people than actually the real targets are. The study also claims that one target is regularly tried to be eliminated by multiple strikes, resulting in shocking number of 1147 deaths where the number of targets was only 41 (Ackermann, 2014). The findings bear evidence of exactly the opposite that is stressed by the American political narratives of the technology. Mainly because of this large gap between the facts and the narratives of the distribution of civilian and terrorist deaths, the United States drone program became a highly controversial issue within the public debate both in and outside the U.S. Based on various data-sets Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies seem to be far less precise than it is constructed by U.S. government officials. However, the program still goes on and continues in the future as well. Scholars from the field of STS approached these automation efforts. Weber and Suchman in their work on *“Human-machine autonomies”* raised attention to the dangers and risks of such future oriented attempts (Suchman, Weber, 2015). Publicly available documents as the Department of Defense’s Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap testify this future vision<sup>1</sup>. But, why is it interesting from an STS point of view?

The future of warfare and war-technologies similarly to other social realms is both *“product of social work and constitutive of forms of social life”* (Jasanoff, 2004, p.2), therefore a research on these technologies has great relevance within the field of STS. The possibility of war is deeply embedded in any human society, our history shows several examples for that. If we look back in time, it becomes visible that war has evolved parallel to societies, today we wage wars very differently than we did 300 years ago. The evolution of weapons and weapon systems seems to be as unstoppable, their transformations determine how we settle our armed conflicts in the future. War could be understood as an extraordinary social order, that has a great effect how people live their life during that period of time. Under the Second World War, men were ordered to the battlefield while women had to maintain homeland

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<sup>1</sup> „The potential for improving capability and reducing cost through the use of technology to decrease or eliminate specific human activities, otherwise known as automation, presents great promise for a variety of DoD improvements.” (Department of Defense, 2013, p.15)



production, basically they ensured the stable background. After the war, the post-WWII social order had never transformed back to its original form. Women entered the labor market, and what we call today emancipation took place. Certainly, in this change war and war-technologies played a key role. During the Second World War, the warfighter had to be physically removed from homeland and was transferred to the actual battlefield, obviously because remote controlling of weapons was not available at that time. As it follows, conventional weapons were constitutive of the social order of WWII. They certainly created a very different kind of social order than drones would have. The time, when armed military drones are used to wage wars instead of ground troops has not arrived yet, but in the future have to face with it.

This opens a legitimate question in the U.S. political context of how the drone program and drone technologies themselves are managed to be both politically and publicly accepted weapons. The making of a sociotechnical imaginary is crucial. Without an attempt to construct the technology as an accepted and clearly wanted option, a future vision where drones are extensively used in armed conflict would definitely collapse. It is especially true for RPA technologies, thus their legality, ethics and accuracy seems to be a relatively controversial issue.

Others have also addressed the issue of drone technologies so far. From the field of surveillance studies, Jutta Weber approached drones with the concepts of “new” technoscientific rationality and preemptive technosecurity (Weber, 2015). Her contribution to the studying of drones, as it follows from her research field, is more focused on the targeting procedures of the technology. In her work, she raises attention to the great network and the data-mining algorithms based on which the technology operates (Weber, 2015, p.109) The practices behind the strikes do not arise in a vacuum. According to her, the surveillance and targeting procedure is embedded and influenced by the new technoscientific rationality, which is characterized by a strong interest in the unknown (Weber, 2015, p.12). Closely connected to this the imaginary where all threats, even the unknown ones, should be eliminated provides further explanation for the extensive use of military drones on the battlefield. Weber calls this preemptive culture of technosecurity (Weber, 2015, p.118).

Derek Gregory geographer and STS scholar, working with the concept of imagined geographies, also conducted research on Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies. Taking into consideration his background, it is not surprising that Gregory’s contribution is more focused on the spatial formations caused by the ‘global war on terror’. He concentrates on how battlefield has been transformed to what he calls “battlespace”, how the boundaries of it became more and more blurred and how drone technologies fit into this new space (Gregory, 2011).

Probably the most inclusive work on military drones within the field of STS had been published by Hugh Gusterson. In his book, he encounters a brief history of the technology, the remixed nature of warfare caused by the emergence of drones, remote intimacy, the question of civilian casualties and drone technologies' relationship towards the idea of democracy (Gusterson, 2016). Gusterson is concerned with the most crucial questions surrounding RPA technologies, however the scope of his book does not allow a deep immersion to any of them. He also very briefly dealt with the narratives around drone technologies, that in my Master Thesis I aim to unpack. However, he treated them as an "official story" (Gusterson, 2016, p. 117) not as attempts to participate in the construction of a sociotechnical imaginary and a future vision of drones.

This is the point, where my contribution to the debate becomes clear-cut. As we could see, there are different works that tackled the surface of the 'drone issue'. In my Master Thesis my aim is to open a new perspective on the topic and discuss it differently than it was before. What I am precisely interested about are the argumentative strategies used by the United States political leadership under the Obama era. My focus is on their efforts to create a sociotechnical imaginary of the drone enabling an acceptable and promising future for all. For this purpose, I have formulated the following research question: *How did the major speeches of politico-administrative actors during the Obama Administration participate in the construction of the sociotechnical imaginary of Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies?*

One thing that directed me towards the investigation of political speeches from the Obama Administration was that the employment of RPAs significantly increased under his two terms of Presidency. The other reason why I narrowed down the scope of my research to this particular period of time is that the actual avowal of using military drone technologies happens in this temporal framework. As a material for my analysis I have chosen three political speeches, one delivered by the ex-Attorney General Eric Holder, another performed by the ex-CIA Director John Brennan, and last one is the Barack Obama's presidential speech on the issue. Besides accessibility, what motivated my choice of material was that these three leaders of the Administration are the most relevant representatives, being powerful and credible enough to start building the imaginary of drones. Their power derives basically from their position that not only influences how they speak but it also enables them to speak at all. The main point was to examine those speech acts which can really participate in the making of a sociotechnical imaginary. Eric Holder as an Attorney General, the Head of the Department of Justice could be observed as the highest position delegate of the Administration's understanding and interpretation of law and legality. If the Attorney General claims that something is lawful or legal, then the statement becomes more stable in the following public discourse. John Brennan as the CIA Director and thus the quasi co-

coordinator of the drone program (Gregory, 2011, p.241) has obviously a huge role in forming any imaginary of the technology. The information that the CIA Director knows enables him to speak about the drone issue, the 'secrets' and background knowledge that comes with his position further arms him with credibility. My choice of the presidential speech is probably the most self-evident, thus the President is not only the Head of the State, but also the Commander-in-Chief. In any armed conflict, the largest part of responsibility rests on this position, so if once the President opted for the employment of RPA technologies in the war on terror, he must take steps to make American people accept and opt for the technology as well.

In the following sections of my Master Thesis, first I will encounter in the State-of-the-Art how scholars have been approached the issue of military drone technologies within the field of Science and Technology Studies so far. In the same section, I discuss the least investigated areas, the 'gaps' where my work can join in and contribute to the larger debate. Under the umbrella of the same chapter, I introduce the concepts of sociotechnical imaginaries and coproduction, the lenses through which I have drawn conclusions from my analysis. Second, I represent my research question and the sub-questions that I attempted to answer in the Master Thesis. Third, in the Material and Methods chapter, I provide an insight to the methodology of narrative analysis that I have applied for my investigation. I encounter how I have conducted my analysis and I provide the contextualization of my material, for each speech separately. Fourth, in the Analysis of the Material and Results chapter, I represent my analytical work during the research. In this section, I briefly encounter the chronological order of the speeches and afterwards I discuss the texts separately. During the analysis I focused on the storyteller's profile, the speeches' plots and sub-narratives. In the end of the analysis chapter, based on the comparison of my results, I draw the standardized plot, the main features that characterize all three of them. Fifth, in the Conclusion chapter, I encounter the employed speech strategies and also how the drone is constructed by the speakers as a legal and moral entity that solves various problems now and in the future as well.

## **2. State-of-the-Art and Theoretical Framing**

### **2.1. History of Drones in the United States**

#### **2.1.1. Emergence of Drones**

The history of remotely piloted aircraft technologies in the U.S. ties back to the Second World War, when the United States developed its own drones imitating the British example of the First World War (Gusterson, 2016, p.9). At that time, the so called “*kamikaze drones*” (Gusterson, 2016, p.9). were also developed, from which the pilot catapulted, and then the plane full off explosives was crashed into the targets. Back then, drones served other purposes too. For instance, remote-controlled B-17s had been developed in order to collect substance from the mushroom clouds of the atomic bomb testings, not risking the pilot’s life and health (Gusterson, 2016, p.9). The first surveillance drones appeared in the 1960’s to be able to safely spy over high risk territories such as North Vietnam. However these “Lightning Bugs” were able to stay only 2 hours in the air (Shaw, 2014). The development of remotely piloted aircraft technologies was boosted when the Global Positioning System (GPS) was finished and started operating successfully (Gusterson, 2016, p.10). Almost parallel to that, the first prototype of the Predator drone was developed and with the use of GPS and its satellites. It became the first drone that could be piloted thousands of miles away. The first deployment of the Predator took place in 1995, when they were used for surveillance purposes in the Bosnian and the Kosovo wars. Interestingly, in actual combat, drones were first used by Iran in the 1980’s in the Iran-Iraq war and not by the United States. Predator drones became armed only in 2001, when Hellfire missiles were inbuilt to them. Because of their fragile construction and low weight, it was a challenge to find the appropriate sized missile, that does not tear its wings apart when fired (Gusterson, 2016, p.11). Back then, the standpoint of the U.S. political leadership was completely different from the recent one, they were harshly against the practices of targeted killings, calling them extrajudicial killing (Gusterson, 2016, p.11). However, this position changed radically after the terror attacks of 9/11, 2001 (Gusterson, 2016, p.12). The terror attack was a turning point in several senses, it dramatically changed people’s expectations about what could be used as a weapon. A few days after 9/11, President Bush authorized targeted killings of al Qaeda and its allies, the armed Predator program was activated and weaponized RPAs reached Afghanistan on October 7<sup>th</sup> 2001 (Shaw, 2014). The Hellfire missile was first used in combat by a Predator drone on 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2002, near the city of Khost in Afghanistan, when a wrong target was identified, and instead of Osama bin Laden, an innocent civilian was killed. A couple of weeks later, in April, Predators were drawn off from Afghanistan, and the first CIA targeted killing outside of a declared warzone took place on 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2002, in Yemen. In this

operation Al-Harethi the mastermind of the USS Cole bombing was targeted (Shaw, 2014). The next object of the U.S. drone program, and still the area where the most targeted killings and strikes had been conducted, was Pakistan from 2004. In this hunter-killer mission Nek Muhammad Pashtun military commander was the prior target and was ‘successfully’ eliminated on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2002 (Shaw, 2014). Most drone strikes took place since U.S. President Barack Obama came to power in 2009. This significant increase did not happen solely because President Obama ordered them so, but there have been major changes in the way how targets were identified. They were no longer named, instead became targeted by the CIA by because of their suspicious behavior, based on patterns of life analysis (Shaw, 2014). How these targeting processes take place, what methodologies are used is discussed later in the chapter.

### **2.1.2. The development of the Predator**

Callam’s paper on Drone Wars introduces three types of RPAs that are currently most commonly used in overseas offensives: MQ-1 Predator, MQ-1C Sky Warrior or Grey Eagle<sup>2</sup> and MQ-9 Reaper or Predator B which are all constructed by the General Atomics (Callam, 2010). Among them, the Predator was and still is the most frequently employed one and the construction of the Grey Eagle and the Reaper was based on the experiences gained from its operation. As it follows, the Predator’s history of development is the most relevant in the context. Abraham Karem drone designer, emigrated from Israel to Los Angeles, was who dreamt the very first direct ancestor of these U.S. drones, a cigar-looking aircraft that he called “Albatross”. This prototype could stay in the air for 56 hours straight (Shaw, 2014). The demonstration of the Albatross inspired the DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), the military’s research and development department, to provide funding for it. The first outcome was a drone called the Amber, developed by Karem’s company the Leading Systems Incorporated. The Amber had its deficiencies. It was not able to carry sophisticated sensor equipment therefore was insufficient for longer surveillance. As a response to its failures, the GNAT-750 was constructed in 1989, that was already equipped with GPS navigation, and had inbuilt infrared and low-light cameras to its nose (The Economist, 2012).

Despite of these advances, by 1990, the U.S. Congress forced the Pentagon to consolidate its RPA research (Congressional block) into a single Joint Program Office, which was not budgeted for any further research (Shaw, 2014). DARPA’s financial support of RPA projects outside of the jurisdiction of the Pentagon was also banned, which basically stopped all RPA development projects. Karem had to sell the Leading Systems to Hughes Aircraft, which sold

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<sup>2</sup> In the Callam text it was named as Sky Warrior, on the website of General Atomics they are called Grey Eagle.

it to the General Atomics in 1990, to the company that decided to continue the development of the GNAT-750 (Shaw, 2014).

In 1992, the Bosnian War erupted causing an urgent need for surveillance technologies, because the quality of satellite intelligence over the region was very poor. The CIA operates outside of the military jurisdiction therefore it was able to bypass the Congressional block on drone development (Shaw, 2014).

With the codename “lofty view”, the CIA operated the GNAT-750s over Bosnia, but it was not a real success. The drones proved to be vulnerable to weather, they could be controlled only closely which greatly limited its surveillance capacities (Shaw, 2014). This is how we have arrived to the “*birth*” of the first Predator drone, in 1994, that was first employed a year later, in 1995 (Shaw, 2014). The Predator’s new satellite communication overcame the limitations of the GNAT-750s, drone operators now could control the vehicles thousand miles apart. Developments that were inevitable for the later weaponization of the Predator also started, its wings were reinforced and were equipped with laser-guided targeting system (Shaw, 2014).

### **2.1.3. Armed Drones of the XXI. Century**

The Predator got equipped with missiles in 2001, becoming surveillance and killing machines at the same time. The first Hellfire missile was used in combat by a Predator drone on 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2001, transforming the previous imaginaries about the nature of war. The use of remotely controlled armed technologies proved to have a great effect on military capabilities. By destroying defense installations, they are able to suppress enemy’s air defense, however in most of the cases they were still too slow and vulnerable against regular air forces, for instance in Iraq (Callam, 2010, p.3). Thanks to the fact that in most of the cases they were successfully used in operations and had many advantageous features, popularity of drones grew so intensely in Congress that in 2007 (opposing the previous measures on their development), the Congress required the Department of Defense (DoD) to pursue unmanned aircraft programs over manned ones (Kindervater, 2016, p.9). One great advantage of RPAs over regular aircraft is that they can be employed individually. On the other hand they can be used in combat to support counterinsurgency operations, to find and eliminate enemy targets and in most of the cases they are used as such. Callam’s article clarifies these two types of operational use of weaponized drones. The first one is direct support to a military operation (generally to ground troops) and the second is the hunter-killer missions (Callam, 2010). Hugh Gusterson in his book rephrased these two options calling them “mixed” in case of ground troop support and “pure” drone warfare in hunter-killer missions (Gusterson, 2016, pp.14-15). The other positive characteristic of drones compared to regular air forces is that remotely piloted vehicles allow pilots to take more risk, to fly lower, to loiter longer resulting

in more accurate strikes. If this accuracy enables avoiding the loss of non-combatant/non-terrorist lives drones should become crucial elements of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations.

In the 2000's the most widely employed U.S. military drones are the MQ1 Predator and the MQ9 Reaper. According to the data sheets of the manufacturer (General Atomics) the MQ1 Predator can stay in the air for 36 hours non-stop and is able to fly 25,000 feet high, making it almost invisible in the sky. The aircraft has been updated with automatic takeoff and landing capability that enables it to be launched and recovered without any operator interaction. That is an important advancement, because most of the RPAs crashed during the landing process. The Predator is now equipped with redundant flight control surfaces, enhanced avionics, and triple-redundant flight control computers. Its maximum speed is 120 knots-true-airspeed which is approx. 222 km/hours<sup>3</sup>.

MQ9 Reaper provides significantly greater capabilities than MQ1 Predator. The Reaper was first flown in 2001, its development was based on the experiences gained from the Predator. The Reaper is twice as fast as a MQ1, speeds of 240 knots-true-airspeed (approx. 444 km/hours – 9 times more horsepower) and has an endurance of over 27 hours, can operate up to 50,000 feet, and has a 3,850 pound (1746 kilogram) payload capacity that includes 3,000 pounds (1361 kilograms) of external stores which is 500% more payload than the Predator had. The Reaper is equipped with the following missiles: Hellfire missiles; GBU-12 laser-guided bombs; GBU-38 JDAM; GBU-49 laser-JDAM<sup>4</sup>.

In spite of their technical advantages, drones have their limitations, thus they are very vulnerable to air defenses, especially if a country has a well-organized one. But not this is their only weakness, there are lots of crashes and errors, for instance MQ1 Predators crash because of mechanical error 43 times/ 100 000 flying hours compared to regular aircrafts that crash 2/ 100 000 flying hours (Callam, 2010, p.4). The other weak-point of the technology is that in most of the cases targets are not captured but eliminated so vast amount of valuable information get lost: "*Dead men tell no tales*" (Callam, 2010, p.4). The problem of collateral damage is still prominent, having civilian casualties in drone attacks could be very contra-productive resulting in the creation of more militants then previously were (Callam, 2010, p.4). The controversy around drones derives from its latter limitations. There are still huge legal and ethical debates on their employment in overseas operations. Taking into account that there is a push to make drones more automated stemming from the increased use of 'pattern of life' analysis (Kindervater, 2016, p.9), these controversies are not going to be silenced but will be even more intense.

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<sup>3</sup>Information from Predator datasheet: <http://www.ga-asi.com/predator-xp>

<sup>4</sup> Information from Reaper datasheet: <http://www.ga-asi.com/predator-b>

## **2.2. STS Analysis of Military technologies**

### **2.2.1. "New" technoscientific rationality**

The operation of Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies is embedded in a very complex network of analysts, pilots, commanders, politico-military actors even before the actual mission. Not only humans participate in this broad network, but during the targeting methodology, data-mining algorithms as well. They search enormous databases for clusters, correlations and certain patterns of behavior (Weber, 2015, p.109). The U.S. main kill list the 'disposition matrix' is based on the targeting methodologies that these algorithms use. Human agency enters on 'Terror Tuesdays' when the U.S. President approves or refuses the selected target (Weber, 2015, p.109). Based on these searching and targeting strategies, theoretically each and every individual on earth can be identified as a target for drones, which logic is deeply grounded in, what Jutta Weber calls, "new" technoscientific rationality and the preemptive culture of technosecurity. The new technoscientific rationality is very flexible and is characterized by a strong interest in the unknown. In this technoscience culture the world is reconfigured as open-ended and unpredictable and at the same time it becomes a place of combination, recombination and re-design (Weber, 2015, p.118). The key features of this technoscientific rationality are systematic tinkering, the use of trial and error, bottom-up search heuristics, ignorance of the logic of cause-and-effect and it focuses on the behavior of entities. Recently it also imprinted itself on the processes of listing and data collection in the 'global war on terror' (Weber, 2015, p.116). As a result the new data-mining algorithms got adapted to this new rationality and opposing their ancestors, they are working in a bottom-up way. Complete data-bases became search spaces, where generic algorithms search for relations, associations, anomalies and try to classify an cluster data to be able to extract patterns. The analysis of more and more inclusive databases to be able to identify potential terrorist targets is deeply rooted in the imaginary that all possible, even the unknown threats should be eliminated. In other words it derives from the preemptive culture of technosecurity (Weber, 2015, p.118). Perceiving the world as loaded with unknown risks from uncertain places expands the imagination of insecurity to a paranoiac level. This paranoia both fuels the constant surveillance of basically any populations and drone strikes against poorly identified targets.

### **2.2.2. Preemptive technosecurity**

All of the U.S. drone attacks and night raids are based on the U.S. governments' main kill list the previously mentioned 'dispositional matrix' which was introduced in 2010 by CIA director John Brennan. The disposition matrix gives a base to drones and Special Forces to



kill or capture enemies (Weber, 2015, p.108). Drones are specially constructed in a way that they are able to conduct targeted killings as precisely as possible. If the aim is selective killing of enemies they seem to be the currently existing best devices to do so, or at least they are said to be. Closely related to this Weber articulates how the culture of “*preemptive technosecurity*” - which seeks to anticipate and avert all potential threats - is connected to the new technorationality and leads automatically to targeted killings of CIA drones: they want to eliminate all “unknown risk by unknown actors” (Weber, 2015, p.118) instead of concentrating on the empirical, causal assessment of objective and concrete threats posed by identifiable ‘risk’ actors. Preemptive technosecurity is fueled by the imagination of the “worst-case scenario” and results in the logic of preemption, the increase of power of imagination prior to power of fact. According to this imagination, preemptive action, real-time tracking and targeting are regarded as appropriate ways to handle the unknown security risks (Weber, 2015, p.118). Nazish Kolsy calls those “unknown” risk elimination processes as TADS (Terror Attack Disruption Strikes) when unknown targets are identified simply on account of their behavior and a strike can be only conducted if there is a “near certainty that the terrorist target is present”. “Near certainty” refers to a condition when in an attack non-combatants will not be injured or killed (Kolsy, 2015). The concept of preemptive technosecurity may help to better understand the U.S. security imaginations and discourses that have been changed radically since the Cold War, when strategists were dealing with known, concrete actors. Today, influenced by the new technoscientific rationality and the culture of preemptive technosecurity, security discourses are organized around possibilistic threats and presumed actors (Weber, 2015, p. 119).

Algorithms have huge, however sometimes invisible, role in defining targets. Therefore they are increasingly powerful non-human actors and became dominant in the discourses and practices of civil and military security agencies (Weber, 2015, p.13). They search databases on quantitative and associative basis (that ignores the cultural, social and political background) in a context where the world is perceived to be incoherent, unpredictable and loaded with risks. The logic that these algorithms follow, deriving from the technoscientific rationality, is not the cause-and-effect, but preemption and possibility. Within this technorational framework, databases and the algorithms searching them, seem to be the best tools for preemptive security measures, thus they do not need the logic of cause-and-effect (Weber, 2015, p.14).

Since the Cold War, war and war technologies have been transformed. Not only security imaginaries and technoscientific rationalities have changed, but several other issues as well. War became more and more distant resulting in a shift of our understanding of the

battlefield. Its demarcations became more ambiguous and turned into rather something that Foucault calls a “battlespace” (Gregory, 2011, p.239).

### **2.2.3. War at distance**

Military drone technologies have remixed war by separating the pilot from the plane and shifting combat from an embodied to a virtual experience. Killing by Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies is ‘remote’ in every sense of the term, it is not only remotely controlled but is remote spatially, emotionally and culturally as well (Gusterson, 2016, pp. 44). Interestingly, if we look at the issue of ‘war at distance’ historically, it was always a trend to develop weapons by which increased distance from the enemy. This is a quite logical process. Combatants sought ways to wage war from distance to be able to protect themselves from the counterattack or reciprocal blow (Gusterson, 2016, p.44). From hand-to-hand combat, through arrow and bow, rifle, machine gun, artillery, aerial bombardment, cruise missiles, intercontinental ballistic missiles we have arrived to the most recent form of distant war-technology the RPAs. However in the previous cases the operator of the weapon had to be physically with the weapon to be able to operate it. In the case of RPAs the spatial relationship between the warrior and the weapon have been disjointed (Gusterson, 2016, p.45). What belonged together previously (the warrior, the weapon and the target) and had been a spatially concentrated ensemble, now has been disarticulated. The re-spatializing dynamics are very asymmetrical in this context. To put it simple, even if a drone is shot down, the pilot goes home (Gusterson, 2016, p.45). This re-spatializing process does not purely increase the distance between the victim and executioners, but at the same time it also compresses space by giving deep experiential immersion in victims’ death. This characteristic of drone warfare is highly paradoxical, while it seems to be facilitating killing it creates new psychological issues that make it even harder (Gusterson, 2016, p.79-81). The question of how the boundaries of the battlefield (or as Foucault and Gregory calls it battlespace, which seem to be more fitting in this context) have transformed during re-spatialization is in the focus of the ongoing debates. Drone pilots can operate RPAs right from the United States. By definition, the place from which the combatant acts becomes part of the battlespace. If we follow this logic, then we may say that drones could not completely separate their pilots from the battlefield. The battleground becomes globalized and is brought inside the national boundaries (Gusterson, 2016, p.48) As a result, the problem of blurring boundaries between civilians and militants flips side and becomes applicable to the U.S. context as well. If the battlespace is partially within U.S. territory, then the clear boundary between the battlefield and civilian space becomes endangered. This process does not only exist in an abstract level –

that theoretically, a drone operator could be 'legally', whatever it means in this context, murdered by a Taliban in his/her office – but war and battlespace also enters to the pilots' domestic lives. A drone operator is not separated from his or her family, s/he remains part of both sites. During the daytime being a soldier who kills, whose job is war and in the evening being a parent, husband/wife (Gusterson, 2016, p.49).

Remote war and re-spatialization have further aspects affecting the drone operators. Constant remote watching of persons results in voyeurism to a greater or smaller extent. It establishes dominance of the watcher over the watched. Paradoxically, remote watching connects the operator and the target but it also reinforces their distance (Gusterson, 2016, p.63). In several cases voyeuristic pleasure makes drone operators satisfied when seeing people die. In the case of months long operation over the same terrain, generally drone pilots become immersed to what and whom they see. Because of the long-lasting surveillance they realize patterns of behavior of certain persons and also start involuntarily create narratives about the people on the other side. This is what Gusterson calls 'remote narrativization' (Gusterson, 2016, p.65). Drone pilots create mental stories in order to make sense of what they have to watch every day, to 'fill-in' the gaps. The problem is that the drone operators tend to believe to know more than actually they do (Gusterson, 2016, p.66). It is also a general belief that drone operators cannot suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder, however this is not the case. Sometimes, they have to watch helplessly how their fellow soldiers are killed in a ground operation, and they also have to face with the results of their own kills (they must document how many persons died in a drone bombardment, therefore have to wait till the dust disappears, and then have to count the victims) (Gusterson, 2016, p.80). In the next sub-chapter I tie back to the re-spatialization and transformation of the battlefield, that took place after 9/11, parallel to the emergence of remotely piloted technologies.

#### **2.2.4. Transformation of battlefield to “battlespace”**

Derek Gregory in his paper articulates that the temporality of military violence has changed after 9/11, the war on terror became a long war, or as other scholars phrased it: Keen (2006) “endless war”, Duffield (2007) “unending war”, Filkins (2008) “forever war”. However Gregory raises attention to that each of these temporal formations imply spatial ones also, therefore – as he calls it – “everywhere war” should be also taken into consideration (Gregory, 2011, p.239).

According to Foucault, war has become a socially constructed pervasive matrix, the notion of 'battlefield' has transformed in the U.S. military doctrine. It is rather understood as a multi-

scalar, multi-dimensional battlespace where everything may become a site of permanent war. Countries where the United States and its allies conduct war and military operations are called 'global borderlands' or 'wild zones' (Gregory, 2011, p.239). Duffield defined borderlands as imagined geographical spaces considered by Western societies as characterized by brutality, excess and breakdown. This imaginary of borderlands imply the rhetorical distinction of 'our' and 'their' wars. 'Our' war is precise, surgical, is conducted by advanced military technologies (such as drones) while 'their' is right the opposite brutal, inhuman and indiscriminately destructive. Of course, reality proves that this distinction is not as sharp as we imagine, it is more blurred in practice (Duffield, 2001, as cited in Gregory, 2011, p.239). Gregory provides a couple of examples when U.S. wars are not as 'clean' as they are represented. During the U.S. counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan 'ragtag' militias were also involved in supporting U.S. military operations. Similarly to that, the U.S. Army pays off warlords or even Taliban militants to ensure and protect their supply-chain from external attack (Gregory, 2011, p.239). Today the imagination of borderlands is even more prominent than the actual cartography, mainly because military violence became loosed from its frames. The conventional tie between war and geographical means got lost, or as Münkler frames it has lost its well-defined contours (Münkler, 2005, as cited in Gregory, 2011, p.239). Transformation of the battlespace however does not only take place in territorial realms. The so called 'civilianization' of war (Gregory, 2011, p.241) also radically transforms battlespace and makes boundaries even more blurred and ambiguous. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles<sup>5</sup> (UAV) are remotely controlled by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the agency also got wide latitude in the 'war on terror' that raises several troubling issues, and pushes the 'battlespace' into the grey zone (Gregory, 2011, p.241). CIA, which was originally a civilian agency, plans and executes the RPA strikes. Despite of the fact that CIA does not operate under military control, therefore is outside the military chain of command, RPAs that are cutting-edge military technologies have been put in the hands of it. In Hugh Gusterson's book Peter Singer analyst described the resulting confusion - even during the actual operation – in the following way:

*“The traditional concept of a military operation is a pyramid, with the strategic commander on top, the operational commanders next, and the tactical commanders on the bottom layer. With the new technologies, this structure isn't just being erased from above, with strategic and operational commanders now getting into the tactical commanders' business. [...] As the operations are located around the world, it is not always clear whose orders take priority.”* (Gusterson, 2016, p.37)

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<sup>5</sup> Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies are also often referred as UAVs, that may be a misleading term, because today's military drones are not completely automated. (Fowler, 2014. p.109)

Moreover CIA operators have no clarified legal authority that makes them “unlawful combatants” based on the categories of the Bush Administration after 9/11 (O’Connell, 2009, as cited in Gregory, 2011, p.241). “*CIA operatives are not trained in the law of armed conflict. They are not bound to the Uniform Code of Military Justice to respect the laws and customs of war. They are not subject to the military chain of command.*” (O’Connell, 2010, p.6) Lines of responsibility is also mixing, resulting in a legal grey zone between the U.S. military and the CIA. This is not the only area where transparency decreased. The boundary between the definition of civilian and militant or ‘legitimate terrorist target’ also became less self-evident (Gregory, 2011, p.242). Basically all military aged Afghan and Pakistani men could be potential ‘legitimate’ targets of drone attacks. Even if remotely piloted aircraft technologies are armed with a sensor and a shooter at the same time, it is far from making the battlespace more transparent. Through the softening lines between civilian and military persons another grey zone emerges in the ‘new style battlespace’ (Gregory, 2011, p.242). In the end, it is hard to determine where it begins and ends.

## **2.3. Sensitizing Concepts**

### **2.3.1. Coproduction**

In the following sections of the Master Thesis my aim is to investigate the construction of sociotechnical imaginaries around U.S military drone technologies, or more precisely how politico-administrative discourses are shaped during the Obama presidency. The conceptual framework of sociotechnical imaginaries is closely tied to the idiom of coproduction, in other words a sociotechnical imaginary is one expression of coproduction. Moreover, the coproductionist idiom generally clusters around certain themes, for instance the emergence and stabilization of new technoscientific objects and framings, (staple concern of constitutive coproduction) which happens to be in my project’s focus also (Jasanoff, 2004, p.38). To be able to unpack and dig deeper in my theoretical framework, going back to what coproduction means is essential. The basic idea of coproduction is that the natural and social orders are produced together that braces the “*idiom of co-production*” with great explanatory power. The core statement of the concept is framed by Sheila Jasanoff as the following: “*ways in which we know and represent the world (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it. Knowledge and its material embodiments are at once products of social work and constitutive of forms of social life*” (Jasanoff, 2004, p.2). Coproduction is trying to avoid the pitfalls of natural and social deterministic debates, it sees knowledge both embeds and is embedded in social practices, identities, discourses, norms, institutions or as Jasanoff calls them social “building blocks” (Jasanoff, 2004, p.3). Its aim is

neither to produce deterministic, rigid explanations of science-technology and society relations, nor to prescribe methodological template for STS research. It rather enlightens a systematic ways of thinking about processes of sense-making through which persons try to understand worlds in which science and technology became permanent fixtures (Jasanoff, 2004, p.38). Science, technology and scientific knowledge are not the reflections of truth or mirrors of reality. Unlike deterministic concepts, coproduction is symmetrical *“it calls attention to the social dimensions of cognitive commitments and understandings, while at the same time underscoring the epistemic and material correlates of social formations”* (Jasanoff, 2004, p.3). Coproduction enables to explore how knowledge-making (and along the same logic technological developments) is conjoined with governance and vice a versa how acts of governance affect knowledge, technology production and use (Jasanoff, 2004, p.3). The design and production of certain technologies does not happen accidentally, it always reflects imaginative faculties, cultural preferences and economic-political resources of their makers and users, that existed even before the invention of an object (Jasanoff, 2004, p.16). With the lens of coproduction questions of power could be approached differently, the sometimes hidden role of expertise, technical practices and material objects in shaping and transforming relations of authority become more visible (Jasanoff, 2004, p.4). Various social structures could be approached and unpacked with the help of this approach, for instance nationhood. Thus in the case of military drone technologies the imaginary of ‘Americanness’ provides basis for political, military and administrative discourses and narratives, opening up the black box of American nationhood with coproduction seem to be a logical step to take. Nation-making depends on deploying representations of symbols that express the nationhood. Along with this logic a nation could be perceived as a network, held together by circulating technologies of representation and communication (Jasanoff, 2004, p.26). This may seem to be reductionist, certainly nation-making and nationality does not purely depend on stressing symbols and continuous communication, however they have important role in creating “imagined communities” (Jasanoff, 2004, p.25): the “we”, “our” and “their” experience. This is clearly traceable in the U.S. political and administrative narratives of drones as well.

### 2.3.2. Sociotechnical Imaginaries

As I have already articulated before, the aim of this Master Thesis is to reveal the narrative efforts of building a sociotechnical imaginary. Drones are not only technical objects with certain features and qualities, they are also products of social, political, cultural negotiations and imaginations (Selchow, 2015, p.56). Because of their rapid spread and the concerns about their legality, RPAs entered to the public debates (Selchow, 2015, p.56). To investigate how the imaginary is made, I focus on the various argumentative strategies and repertoires employed in political speeches. I will back up my analysis with Sheila Jasanoff's concept of sociotechnical imaginaries that is defined by her as the following: "*collectively held and performed visions of desirable futures animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through and supportive of, advances in science and technology*" (Jasanoff, 2015, p.19) By focusing on sociotechnical imaginaries, one can ask how the relationship between science, technology, and society are collectively imagined at the broader political levels of state and society. She also adds that sociotechnical imaginaries are collective, durable, capable of being performed (eg.: as mentioned in forms of political actions), are temporally situated and culturally particular. These imaginaries are products and instruments of the coproduction of science, technology and society (Jasanoff, Kim, Sperling, 2007, p.6). In order to understand sociotechnical imaginaries I will focus on the *making, rehearsal and stabilization*. The building process of sociotechnical imaginaries runs through several stages. The first one is assembling where a certain orientation is very fragile so multiple rehearsals, memory practices have to follow it in order to produce stable outcomes (Felt, 2015, p.117). If the rehearsals are successful it leads to stabilization where only a few other interpretations are given space. When the emerging sociotechnical imaginary becomes part of a nation's collective identity, its elements could be transferred and blended into future technological debates, where they become sources of people's imagination of relations between technological projects and preferred ways of living and social order (Felt, 2015, p.118). Accordingly, "*sociotechnical imaginaries are at once descriptive of attainable futures and prescriptive of the futures that ought to be attained*" (Jasanoff, Kim, Sperling, 2007, p.2). Political imaginaries' and collective memories' relation to national identities is also crucial for my investigation to be able to open up the already taken for granted, "black-boxed" dominant ideas existing in the American society. The concept of sociotechnical imaginaries is a useful tool to see how the 'drone issue' is continuously reopened and how the necessity of such technologies for the US military is stabilized and naturalized within the public discourse. "*Austrianness, became tied to an imaginary of technological choice, namely, keeping a set of technologies out of the national territory*" (Felt, 2015, p.104). In the U.S. context the reverse of this statement could be

applied to Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies. The difference is that here we can talk about keeping in or introducing set of technologies (various RPAs- Predators, Reapers, surveillance drones etc.) to military realms.

Another concept that provides a useful complementary framework for my analysis is national technopolitical identities. They are created through messy and long term processes and are maintained through the (non-) uptake of certain technological developments (Felt, 2015, p.104). Their building processes could be best described or in other words the black box of national technopolitical identities could be opened with the previously described concept of sociotechnical imaginaries. It allows us to see how the development of technoscientific projects and imagined preferred ways of living, values and social order are mutually constitutive (Felt, 2015, p.104). National imaginations penetrate the very designs and practices of scientific research and technological development, and the resulting “technopolitics” may in turn shape not only the narrow issues surrounding them but also wider social and political debates (Sunder Rajan, 2005, El-Haj, 2001, Hecht, 1998, as cited in Jasanoff, Kim, Sperling, 2007, p.6) To be able to understand the sense making and positioning of citizens towards a certain technology an investigation of the past political and technopolitical work and the impact of national collective memory practices is needed (

Felt, 2015, p.110). Already existing collective memories contribute to the stabilizing processes, especially if these memories are dominant and robust enough (Felt, 2015, p.106). In this particular case of drone technologies the so called Vietnam syndrome<sup>6</sup> could be one of those collective memories which is still present in the American society. In 2009, conservative scholar Max Boot said that George H.W. Bush got it wrong with his 1991 proclamation when he claimed that “we’ve kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all.” — Vietnam syndrome was alive and well in the Obama era (Slavin, 2014). The combination of the Vietnam syndrome and the United States’ national identity as the “world’s policeman”, deeply rooted in the Truman doctrine<sup>7</sup> (McElroy, 2015) provides a firm ideological background for the political narrative efforts of building and stabilizing the sociotechnical imaginary of drones.

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<sup>6</sup> Vietnam syndrome offered by journalist and Vietnam War author Marvin Kalb, who called it “a fundamental reluctance to commit American military power anywhere in the world, unless it is absolutely necessary to protect the national interests of the country.” (Slavin, 2014)

<sup>7</sup> The Truman doctrine pledged American assistance to any nation that resisted communism (McElroy, 2015)



### **3. Research Question**

Thus my aim with the Master Thesis is a contribution to field elaborated in the State-of-the-Art, I have developed a research question that might enlighten new aspects in relation to RPA technologies. Before I have actually started the research, while reading and ‘pretesting’ the collected material I have realized that similar argumentative topics appear in them. Stressing and repeating similar arguments may indicate that the making/constructing of a certain imaginary happens along the lines. This suspicion encouraged me to focus on this particular aspect. I have decided to concentrate on the two terms of the Obama Administration mainly because the employment of drones in overseas operations increased significantly at that period of time (Kolsy, 2015, p.2). My research question would be the following:

*How did the major speeches of politico-administrative actors during the Obama Administration participate in the construction of the sociotechnical imaginary of Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies?*

In order to answer my main question, I have formulated seven less-complex sub-questions:

- 1. How are the plots of the analyzed speeches built in order to construct Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies as ‘the option to take’?*
- 2. Which major sub-narratives can be identified?*
- 3. What is the choreography?*
- 4. How is the speakers’ position reflected in how they construct the drone technology?*
- 5. Which are the dominant, already stabilized ideas within the American society that are used to reinforce the stabilization of imaginaries of Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies?*
- 6. What argumentative repertoires are being used and which values are embedded in these technologies?*
- 7. How are possible futures constructed embedded in the sociotechnical imaginary of drones?*

## 4. Material and Methods

### 4.1. What is a narrative?

„Narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances – as though any material were fit to receive man’s stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting ... stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation.” (Barthes, 1977, p.79 as cited in Czarniawska, 2004, p.3)

Jerome Bruner in his work on *The Narrative Construction of Reality* identifies ten features of narrative that provides a deeper insight to their main characteristics (Bruner, 1991, p.6). The first feature is *narrative diachronicity*, meaning that a narrative is an account of events occurring over time, therefore it is irreducibly durative. Time is essential here. Even though narratives can be characterized in non-temporal terms, it results in solely a summary of events occurring over time (Bruner, 1991, p.6). Second is their *particularity*, narratives take as their ostensive reference particular happenings. The narrative particulars can be filled in when they are missing from an account, Bruner brought the example of a gift that could be either a flower, a perfume or anything else, which may serve as a token or emblem of a gift (Bruner, 1991, p.6). *Intentional state entailment* is the third feature, pointing out that in narratives, people act in a setting and what happens to them must be relevant to their beliefs, desires, values etc. The loose link between intentional states and actions is the reason rather than cause. Reason becomes the basis for interpreting the character’s actions (Bruner, 1991, p.7). The fourth characteristic is *hermeneutical composability*, meaning that the telling of and the understanding as a story depend on the human capacity to process knowledge in a hermeneutical interpretative way (Bruner, 1991, p.8). Why? The narrative is either put together by a speaker or interpreted by a listener. Bruner argues strongly, that the hermeneutical interpretation of narratives is necessary, if one feels that it is not needed that is simply an illusion created by a skilful narrative, rooted in “narrative seduction” or “narrative banalization”. Bruner also highlights that it is not ambiguity that forces us to interpretation in understanding a narrative, but narrative itself (Bruner, 1991, p.9). He also encounters two contextual domains (intention and background knowledge) that have to do more with the context – condition of telling - than the text –what is told- , therefore provide basis for interpretation (Bruner, 1991, pp.10-11). The fifth feature is *canonicity and breach*. Not all sequence of events is a narrative, even if it is diachronic, particular or organized around intentions. Narratives require scripts as necessary backgrounds, but to be worth

telling, the story has to be about how the canonical script has been violated or deviated (Bruner, 1991, p.11). Cognitive theorists have also discussed scripts as mental ways of understanding both new and old situations. Scripts organize various segments of our lives (political campaigning as well) and they are not only cognitive, cultural and normative, but they are future oriented as well (Hyvärinen, 2007, p.455). The sixth, *referentiality*, basically refers to what I will later elaborate more the “narratives indifference to extralinguistic reality” (Czarniawska, 2004, p.8). The narrative truth is judged by its verisimilitude rather than its verifiability, meaning that the acceptance or refusal of a narrative does not depend on its reality or fictionality (Bruner, 1991, p.13). *Genericness*, so that there are different kinds of narrative (comedy, tragedy, satire etc.) is the seventh feature. Genre could be understood both as a property of text and as a way of comprehending narrative (Bruner, 1991, p.14). Genres could be seen as models that limit the task of hermeneutic sense-making of narratives. Therefore, they may have as powerful influence in shaping our modes of thought as they have in creating the realities that their plots depict (Bruner, 1991, p.15). Narratives are necessarily normative, thus their eighth feature is *normativeness* (Bruner, 1991, p.15). However the normativeness of narrative does not have to come out on a right side, nor is it historically or culturally terminal. It is rather its form that changes with the circumstances of its production or the preoccupation of the age (Bruner, 1991, p.16). The ninth feature of narrative is *context sensitivity and negotiability*. The reader, listener or hearer is context sensitive, thus s/he inevitably takes the storyteller’s intentions in terms of background knowledge into account when interpreting. This sensitivity makes narrative discourse in everyday life an instrument for cultural negotiation or in other words, the context dependence of narrative permits cultural negotiation. There are always confronting or different versions of certain stories, and as the author nicely points out “*we rarely need legal confrontation to settle the difference*” (Bruner, 1991, p.17). Last, but not least, the tenth feature is *narrative accrual*. Narratives do accrue and create “culture”, “history” or “tradition”, and build on each other. Bruner brings the example of jurisdiction where principles such as *stare decisis* (precedent) function. Precedents assure that once a case (narrative) has been interpreted in a way, future similar cases should be interpreted equivalently. The legal system itself imposes an orderly process of narrative accrual (Bruner, 1991, p.18). Two strategies are encountered that may guide the accrual of narratives into “world versions”, one of them is historical-causal entailment and the other is coherence by contemporaneity. For the former, the example of Archduke Ferdinand’s assassination as the cause of WWI’s outbreak is brought up, while the latter is explained as being a belief that things happening at the same time must be connected (Bruner, 1991, p.19).

## 4.2. Narratives in political speeches

After the exhausting introduction of the narrative and its ten features, it became quite clear-cut that narratives are not just simply stories. Even though their construction is crucial, their operation as instruments of mind in the construction of reality is more important (Bruner, 1991, p.6).

Political speeches are not exception. Narratives are present in them as well in various forms (eg.: in forms of political myths). A political narrative could be defined as a narrative produced by politicians and public officials in the course of their duties (Shenhav, 2006, p. 247). Thus political speeches are highly asymmetrical forms of communication, they generally confront these narratives for the people without actually including them in the conversation: *“this is what power is about”* (Czarniawska, 2004, p.5). However, as Czarniawska clearly points out, one could never be the sole author of a narrative, always some kind of positioning must take place. Even in case of political communication this positioning will be accepted, rejected or improved upon by the partners in the conversation (Czarniawska, 2004, p.5). One cannot only position him or herself, but also his or her viewpoint or opinion about certain issues. Narratives could be used as tools to ‘sell’ something or even somebody. It could be either a person for instance a candidate during the political campaign, but it could be a technology or an ideology as well. Similarly to science, political decision-making also needs narrative for its legitimization, there has to be a story to be told why certain decisions are necessary or more harshly inevitable for the society (Czarniawska, 2004, p.7). Closely related to this, Bruner argues that people organize their experiences and memories mainly in the form of narrative, for instance stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing (Bruner, 1991, p.4). Based on this, memories, especially collective ones, and experiences could be influenced with storytelling. Political speeches exploit this, they not only use past narratives that are already deeply embedded in people’s collective memory (eg. 9/11 in case of the U.S.) but they also build on them and tell new stories. In this way they can shape the collective thought and possible future visions.

Political speeches are not only building blocks of a larger societal narrative, but they could be approached as narratives themselves. Similarly to other communicative acts, they have an internal logic, a plot including sub-narratives. Plot is the basic means by which specific events are brought in one meaningful whole. Without emplotment, events would be represented as lists or chronicles, but when they are connected for instance based on causality or reason they become narratives. Unlike science, narrative leaves open the nature of this connection, there is an openness to competing interpretations, which would be a “vice in science” (Czarniawska, 2004, p.7). But, how should we understand this openness? It means that the

events could be organized around different plots, therefore the same sequence of events may have very different meanings. As a result, a special type of explanation is possible within a narrative, where it consists in relating an event to a human project. According to Polkinghorne, when a human event is said to not make sense, it is the result of a person's inability to integrate the event into a plot (Polkinghorne, 1987, as cited in Czarniawska, 2004, p.8). Reflecting on my own project, because plot is the 'platform' where all events meet and build up meaning, investigating the choreography in the speeches that create a plot where the 'drone argument can enter' is crucial.

Czarniawska refers to Bruner who states that in a narrative it is the plot rather than the truth or falsity of story that determines the power of the narrative as a story. There are no structural differences between a fictional or factual narratives, their seduction does not depend on the truth of their claims (Czarniawska, 2004, p.8).

*"Unlike the constructions generated by logical and scientific procedures that can be weeded out by falsification, narrative constructions can only achieve "verisimilitude". Narratives, then, are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and "narrative necessity" rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness, although ironically we have no compunction about calling stories true or false."* (Bruner, 1991, p.4)

The power of the story does not depend on its connection to reality but on its openness for negotiating meaning (Czarniawska, 2004, p.9). He calls the relevance of plot over falsity or truth of the story as the narrative's indifference to extralinguistic reality, which is compensated by extra sensibility to the reality of the speech. The attractiveness of a narrative is situationally negotiated (Czarniawska, 2004, p.8). As it follows, what makes narratives so interesting to observe is their convincing power. A story can be extremely convincing even if it claims completely untrue things. Conspiracy theories are nice examples for that. Even if the Chemtrail theory contradicts the laws of physics and aerodynamics, a lot of people believe it.

Another key point of the emplotment is what Czarniawska called the "emplotment of the broadcast" (Czarniawska, 2004, p.23). Actors are essential in a plot, as the term suggests they are the ones who act in the story. Therefore constructing characters, the hero and the villain, is crucial. According to Propp, the most important component of the tale is the function that an action of a character plays in the whole of the story (Propp, 1968, p.21 as cited in Czarniawska, 2004, p.77). The characters may stand for certain values and moral standpoints, for instance the hero is the representative of justice and the villain is of treachery. The clashes of the two opponent characters push the story forward. Editor Shawn Coyne working with the stories of popular literature, points out that the villain provides all of the conflict. This conflict drives the story. Without a basic conflict, the story cannot be

successful (Shawn, 2015). In this sense, the story and emplotment of popular literature works very similar to the one of political speeches. Both of them want to convince and seduce their undifferentiated audience.

### **How can sub-narratives be caught in the act and what is their function in political speeches?**

Thus “*all forms of human communication need to be seen fundamentally as stories*” (Fisher, W.R. 1987, as cited in Czarniawska, 2004, p.11) political speeches could be treated in a similar way. Even if they are highly asymmetrical ways of communication, where the speaker (usually a political leader) dominates the communicative act and the audience is silent (Hammer, 2010, p.270), they have huge effect on how people perceive or imagine certain things. Speeches are generally discussed in the media after their performance, their circulation within society begins and depending on their power and construction they either achieve their original goal (eg.: build up the desired imaginary) or not. In the plots of political speeches not only the characters are present but it includes various sub-narratives as well. As the aim of this Master Thesis is to map how the politico-administrative actors of the Obama Era participate in the making of the sociotechnical imaginary of Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies, a careful investigation of sub-narratives’ contribution to the building of the imaginary is an inevitable step. In her paper, Stefanie Hammer touches upon the topic of political myths that could be observed as sub-narratives, as effective elements of a larger political narrative (Hammer, 2010, p.272). I can completely line up with Hammer when she points out that the survival of nation states depends on the loyalty of their citizens, which loyalty must be attained and maintained partly by the forces of narratives (Hammer, 2010, p.269). As it follows, the basic step to achieve any acceptance with a speech is to continuously maintain that loyalty by constructing the targeted imagined community: the nation. Nations could be formed with the help of narratives and stories, for which Hammer brought the nice example of the “American Creed”. American Creed is a political myth stating that America is open to anyone who wants to be an American and commits him or herself to the nation’s political ideology and the ideals of liberty, equality and republicanism (Hammer, 2010, p.272). Myths and sub-narratives are general components of speeches, hence narrative analysis provides useful toolkit of investigation in my own material as well. Hammer discussed the narratives of election campaigns that influence people in their voting decisions (Hammer, 2010). Clear-cut, this is their first and foremost purpose. The function of narratives is similar in cases when the aim is to influence the audience to opt for or against the use of a technology. In this sense, the object shall not matter. If the spokesperson is

successful enough in the storytelling and constructs a coherent narrative, it does not matter whether s/he wants to 'sell' him/herself or a technology.

### **4.3. Narrative Analysis in the Master Thesis**

For my analysis I have chosen three speeches from three political leaders of the Obama Administration, whose public performance has incontestably great relevance in the construction of the sociotechnical imaginary of drones. In the analysis chapter I encounter them in a chronological order, where the first speech is ex-Attorney General Eric Holder's from 2012, the second is ex-CIA Director John Brennan's from 2013 and the third is ex-President Barack Obama's also from 2013. The contextualization of the material is further elaborated below, in sub-section 4.4 'Contextualization of Material'. In the following lines, I want to provide some insight to the methodological choices I made during my analysis, more precisely my aim is to reflect on how I have conducted my research step-by-step.

As I have pointed out in the introduction, the main reason of my choice of these three speech acts is their obvious relevance deriving from the positions of the speakers. Eric Holder as an Attorney General, the Head of the Department of Justice could be observed as the highest position delegate of the Administration's understanding and interpretation of law and legality. If the Attorney general claims that something is lawful or legal, that statement becomes more stable than if anyone else from the Administration was claiming the same. John Brennan as a CIA Director and thus the quasi co-coordinator of the drone program (Gregory, 2011, p.241) has obviously a huge role in forming any imaginary of the technology, basically because of the expected amount of information that a CIA Director knows. His position and background knowledge enables him to speak about the drone issue, moreover it arms him with extra credibility. My choice of the Presidential speech is probably the most self-evident, thus the President is not only the Head of the State, but he is also the Commander-in-Chief. In any armed conflict, the largest part of responsibility rests on this position, so if once the President opted for the employment of RPA technologies in the war on terror, he must take steps to make American people to accept and opt for the technology as well.

After having collected and selected my material, in order to be able to synthesize data and compare the texts I started coding them, incident-by-incident. Coding helped me in deconstructing the texts and in observing more clearly how their plots are constructed and what sub-narratives could be identified in these plots. First of all I have studied the speeches as forms of narratives, so their plots (villains, heroes, setting), their sub-narratives and what

work they actually do. Afterwards, on the second level of analysis I examined how these might come together in the three speeches and contribute to the wider narrative, where the sociotechnical imaginary of U.S. military drone technologies is constructed.

#### **4.4. Contextualization of Material**

In order to provide an inclusive analysis of the material in the following section of the Master Thesis, the mapping of context is necessary. As I have briefly touched upon, Bruner argued for the context sensibility of narratives, meaning that the hearer is context sensitive, thus s/he inevitably takes the storyteller's intentions in terms of background knowledge into account when interpreting (Bruner, 1991, p.17). Therefore a careful consideration of context is essential in narrative analysis. When, why, and where are the main questions I aim to address in this sub-chapter. Political speeches are not only well structured, but their setting is also carefully constructed to reach directly the desired effect. They are very often tied to fresh legal acts or controversial events. If they are delivered right after the approval of a new regulation (two out of three speeches here) they could be approached as verbal explanations of the situation in which the regulation is embedded. Similarly, they can be observed as oral affirmations of the necessity of the act. Place matters. The ways in which technosciences are interwoven with a specific society frame how citizens build their individual and collective positions towards them (Felt, Fochler, Winkler, 2010). This is one important aspect from which the location of the speaker matters. The other is that place and setting armors the speaker and the speech itself with more power and has relevance in the meaning-making (Felt, Fouché, Miller, Smith-Doerr, 2017, p.14). There is a great role of place someone is speaking from, locution-location relationship matters. Space is not simply a stage where action takes place. It is a constitutive system of human interaction, thus the position one speaks from determines what can be spoken (Felt, Fouché, Miller, Smith-Doerr, 2017, p.14). Radically represented, it really makes a difference if a person talks in front of thousands for example at the Times Square, or if the same person performs the same text in front of 30 people in a bar. An interesting observation is that all of the three speeches had been delivered at a prominent educational center: either at a university or at an international center for scholars. The structure of university lecture halls is very similar to theaters', moreover these institutions are very specialized, so it is easier to attract and talk to an 'appropriate' audience. Deriving from the topic of Obama's and Brennan's speech it seems to be quite logical to deliver them at educational centers that are specialized in defense or international relations. In case of Eric Holder, choosing a law university school again seems to be a structured decision. Here, the selection of place was not focused purely on the topic of his speech, but



also on his own position, thus he was the Attorney General of the U.S. from 2009-2015. Moreover in case of Holder the selection of setting was also harmonizing with the legal controversy he was trying to explain. In the following section, I encounter the context of the three speeches separately, especially with a focus on place, timing and possible legislative acts or events. In the contextualization of material sub-section I kept the real-chronological order of the speeches. First I start the mapping with ex- Attorney General Eric Holder's speech (March, 2012) followed by ex- CIA Director John Brennan's performance (April, 2012). Last but not least, I sketch the context of the presidential speech, probably the most influential of the three from 2013.

### **I. Transcript of Attorney General Eric Holder's Speech at Northwestern University School of Law Chicago, IL United States Monday, March 5, 2012**

Full speech is available on YouTube (40:19): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZX8rtuqMiw>

Ex-Attorney General Eric Holder's speech was delivered at the Northwestern University School of Law in Chicago, which is the fourth best law university in the United States. Only Yale, Stanford and Harvard are before it<sup>8</sup>. For this setting a prominent institution was chosen, that fits to the rhetor's position. The reason behind the delivery of this speech was Anwar al-Awlaki's targeted killing. Being a U.S. citizen, an argument for the legality of the action was clearly needed. It could have influenced the choice of scene, since a legal justification argument is more powerful if one performs it in front of legal experts and lawyers.

Anwar al-Awlaki was a Mexico-born radical Muslim cleric who was killed by a Hellfire missile on 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2011. The Administration refused to release the memorandum of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel which signed off on killing Awlaki (Savage, 2012). This refusal clearly needed an explanation, because by delegation from the Attorney General, the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Office of Legal Counsel provides authoritative legal advice to the President and all the Executive Branch agencies<sup>9</sup>. As the Office of Legal Counsel is being responsible for providing legal advices for the President, their refusal to declassify the document evoked serious questions about accountability. Eric Holder's speech was designed to provide explanation of the government's reasoning.

What caused severe indignation was that Awlaki was an American citizen, therefore his targeted killing was a sensitive issue. U.S. citizens, similarly to the citizens of other countries,

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<sup>8</sup> Best law school ranking 2017: <https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/law-rankings>

<sup>9</sup> Office of Legal Counsel: <https://www.justice.gov/olc>

have the right to have a trial before they are sentenced. Anwar al-Awlaki was deprived of this right and was killed without being sentenced to death legally (Savage, 2012). Thus this is a serious legal issue and the President's responsibility is partly shifted to his legal advisers (Office of Legal Counsel) led by the Attorney General. As a result, the relevant person who could provide some kind of explanation for this step was Eric Holder.

## **II. John O. Brennan, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, gave these remarks at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC on April 30, 2012. "The Ethics and Efficacy of the President's Counterterrorism Strategy"**

Full speech available on the Wilson Center's website:

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/the-efficacy-and-ethics-us-counterterrorism-strategy>

CIA director John Brennan's speech was delivered at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, where experts and scholars with nationally and internationally relevant topics conduct their research. The center is non-partisan and its aim is to build a bridge between academia and public policy, moreover to provide solutions to the nation's problems and challenges<sup>10</sup>. Their research is focused on the most pressing challenges facing the U.S. policy, community and public. Among the core issues we find: Cold War history, ISIS, CIBER security, Energy, Migration, National Security, Nuclear Weapons, Trade and many others<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, the Wilson Center is encountered as one of the leading think tanks all over the world. According to the ranking from 2014 "Top Think Thanks Worldwide" (U.S. and non-U.S.), the Woodrow Wilson Center was standing on the prominent 10<sup>th</sup> place, getting ahead of organizations such as the Amnesty International, the Transparency International or the Human Rights Watch (McGann, 2015, p.65). Similarly to the setting of the Holder speech, an acknowledged and prestigious institution was chosen as stage.

The speech was delivered a couple of days after a significant policy shift took place in the use of drone strikes in overseas operations. The CIA and the Joint Special Operations Command's (JSOC) authority was expanded to fire on targets based solely on their detected patterns of behavior. Before the approval, only strikes against known terrorist leaders on the CIA and JSOC target list were allowed (Miller, 2012).

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<sup>10</sup> Woodrow Wilson Center (Mission): <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/about-the-wilson-center>

<sup>11</sup> Woodrow Wilson Center (Mission): <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/about-the-wilson-center>

### **III. Transcript of President Obama’s speech on U.S. drone and counterterror policy, as provided by the White House (2013) – 21 pages**

Full speech is available on YouTube (59:12): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fag9T12UK\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fag9T12UK_w)

The speech was delivered on 23<sup>rd</sup> of May in 2013, at the National Defense University, and basically that was the President’s first major speech on counterterrorism policy of his second term. The choice of place was not accidental again, thus the mission of the National Defense University’s (NDU) mission is to develop joint warfighters and other national security leaders through strict academics, research and engagement to serve national defense<sup>12</sup>. The NDU was established in 1976 in order to provide a joint higher education for the nation’s defense community. The institution is funded by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and includes several colleges and centers under its umbrella:

- CAPSTONE
- Center for Applied Strategic Learning (CASL)
- Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD Center)
- College of Information and Cyberspace (CIC), formerly the Information Resources Management College (IRMC)
- College of International Security Affairs (CISA)
- Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy (ES), formerly the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF)
- Institute for National Security Ethics and Leadership (INSEL)
- Joint Forces Staff College (JFSC)
- KEYSTONE
- National War College (NWC)
- PINNACLE
- Reserve Components National Security Course (RCNSC)<sup>13</sup>

The broader context of the speech is, that it was delivered one day after the “*Presidential Policy Guidance on Procedures for Approving Direct Action against Terrorist Targets Located Outside the United States and Areas of Active Hostilities*” had been signed by Obama on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2013.

The censored text of the Presidential Policy Guidance is also available online:

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3006440-Presidential-Policy-Guidance-May->

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<sup>12</sup> NDU website (vision and mission): <http://www.ndu.edu/About/Vision-Mission/>

<sup>13</sup> NDU (colleges and centres): <http://www.ndu.edu/Academics/Colleges-Centers/>

[2013-Targeted.html](#), however from this text for obvious reasons (it was a top secret document) several parts were erased.

The regulation established standards for the operating procedures. It regulates the direct actions of the U.S. in the following cases: lethal and non-lethal uses of force, including capture operations, against terrorist targets outside the U.S. and areas of active hostilities<sup>14</sup>. The guidance regulates the already operating procedure indicating that drones had been already employed on the battlefield. As a result, some kind of verbal explanation or legitimizing step was urgent to take. Moreover, drone strikes significantly intensified under the Obama Administration, they could not be kept in secret anymore. The approval of a legal act and an announcement was 'in the air' for a long time. The presidential speech was the third in chronological order, so it could build on the arguments of the previous ones. I would not say that the presidential speech was contributing to a well discussed topic, but it was not the first one that had to provide explanations for the already taken actions. Obama's speech was delivered on a partly settled ground. It could build on the stories of the previously performed two speeches, therefore could open further questions regarding the drone issue.

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<sup>14</sup> Presidential Policy Guidance: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3006440-Presidential-Policy-Guidance-May-2013-Targeted.html>

## **5. Analysis of the Material**

### **Results**

In the following chapter, I will represent my narrative analysis of three political speeches from the second term of the Obama Administration. Narratives are one of the biggest sense-making tools (Abolafia, 2010, p.364). “Storying the world” largely contributes to how we make meanings (Mishler, 1995, p.117 as cited in Shenhav, 2006, p.245). Through narratives collective memories, national identity and possible futures could be constructed. Similarly, people make sense of war and armed conflicts by means of stories. Graaf, Dimitriu and Ringsmose called the narratives of war as “strategic narratives” (Graaf, Dimitriu, Ringsmose, 2015, p.7) Political elites justify and explain their actions in war through stories that embed national culture of norms, values and attitudes (Graaf, et al., 2015, p.8). Accordingly, strategic narratives are employed to convince the domestic audience of the need to support the human and financial costs of war (Graaf, et al., 2015, p.8). *“Strategic narratives are best understood as sense-making devices deliberately designed and employed by political elites with the aim of raising public support for often complex, lengthy, and burdensome military operations”* (Graaf, et al., 2015, p.8). As a result, using narrative analysis to unpack stories of drones circulating in the society is a useful tool for conducting my research.

What I am attempting to do here is to deconstruct ex- Attorney General Eric Holder’s, ex-CIA Director John Brennan’s and ex- U.S. President Barack Obama’s speeches in order to examine their plot and their adjusting sub-narratives that together form a narrative infrastructure and build up one larger narrative (Deuten, Rip, 2000). In order to see how the narrative infrastructure is formed, the examination of the plot of the speeches is crucial, thus it is the basic means by which specific events are brought in one meaningful whole. Without emplotment, events would be represented as lists or chronicles, but when they are connected for instance based on causality or reason they become narratives (Czarniawska, 2004. p.7). Sub-narratives or as Deuten and Rip calls them narrative building blocks are essential to be analyzed thus they continue to be taken up and become accepted ingredients of the story. These bricks orient action and interaction in the setting, the building blocks and their linkages constitute a narrative infrastructure (Deuten, Rip, 2000, p.74).

By definition the “[...] *narrative infrastructure is the evolving aggregation of actors/narratives in their material and social settings that enables and constrains the possible stories, actions and interactions by actors. [...] When a narrative infrastructure evolves out of the stories, actions and interactions of the actors involved actors become characters that cannot easily change and role by their own initiative.*” (Deuten, Rip, 2000, p. 74)

The narratives constructed by policymakers should not be treated as simple collection of different stories, rather they should be viewed as contributing to and simultaneously being nourished and stabilized by a wider narrative infrastructure (Felt, 2017, p.56). Narratives can take different forms, including assessments, reconfigurations, future-oriented accounts voicing promises or potential threats and moral reflections (Felt, 2017, p.56). It applies to political narratives as well, therefore it should be kept in mind during the analysis.

Based on the analysis, the one larger narrative that is formed by the speeches has a relatively standardized plot. Certainly, the speech acts differ a lot in the 'hows', but they have several points in common such as the main characters or the setting. This standardized plot will be discussed in the very end of the detailed analysis of the three speeches.

With the structuring of my analysis, I will follow the chronological order of the three speeches, starting with Eric Holder's speech, delivered at the Northwestern University of Law in Chicago, 2012. The second one is John Brennan's, which was delivered in the same year, at the Woodrow Wilson Center. Last, I represent the analysis of the most inclusive speech regarding drone technologies, Barack Obama's from 2013, delivered at the National Defense University.

### **Chronology**

As we go along the chronology of the speeches, it seems that they show broadening scope of topic. The oldest speech is the narrowest while the latest is the broadest in terms of covered issues. First in chronological order, Eric Holder's speech, focuses on the legal issues concerning targeting and surveillance procedures. The second on the timeline, CIA Director John Brennan's speech primarily talks about two ways of discussing counterterrorism strategy, ethics and efficacy. Counterterrorism strategy covers larger set of issues than purely targeting or surveillance, which will be elaborated in this chapter. The third in chronology, the most inclusive speech is the Presidential Speech, in which Barack Obama encounters both counterterrorism and the U.S. drone policies.

## **5.1. Analysis of Eric Holder's Speech**

### **5.1.1. Storyteller's profile**

Who talks and from where?

The speaker is Attorney General Eric Holder who was in office from 2009-2015. The Attorney General is the head of the U.S. Department of Justice and is member of the Cabinet. To this position one is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate<sup>15</sup>. As it follows the Attorney General represents the governmental position and standing point of certain issues. Speeches of the Attorney General should be treated as such.

What is the purpose of this speech?

The first and foremost purpose is to argue for the legality of targeting procedures and the lethal actions following them (Savage, 2012). The argument is extended to the case of American citizens as well, thus this particular speech was delivered in order to provide an explanation for performing a drone strike on a U.S. citizen, Anwar al Awlaki (Savage, 2012). The ultimate aim is to convince the audience of the legality and necessity of targeted lethal strikes.

How much does he know and what does he share?

As member of the Cabinet, without doubt the Attorney General knows almost all the details about surveillance and targeting procedures, capturing and lethal actions. Obviously, he cannot and does not want to share all the information he owns. Rather he shares only those details that support the argument of legality, the negative side is completely neglected. Contradicting voices are mentioned purely to reinforce own argument, and to show their inaccuracy.

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<sup>15</sup> Legal Information Institute 28 U.S. Code § 503 - Attorney General:  
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/28/503>

**ex-Attorney General  
Eric Holder's Speech (2012)**

DOJ - Department of Justice  
ALQ - al Qaeda

- = prominent sub-narratives
- [ ] = argumentative elements connecting to sub-narratives
- (dashed) = mentioned, but missing from the plot
- ★ = entrance of the drone

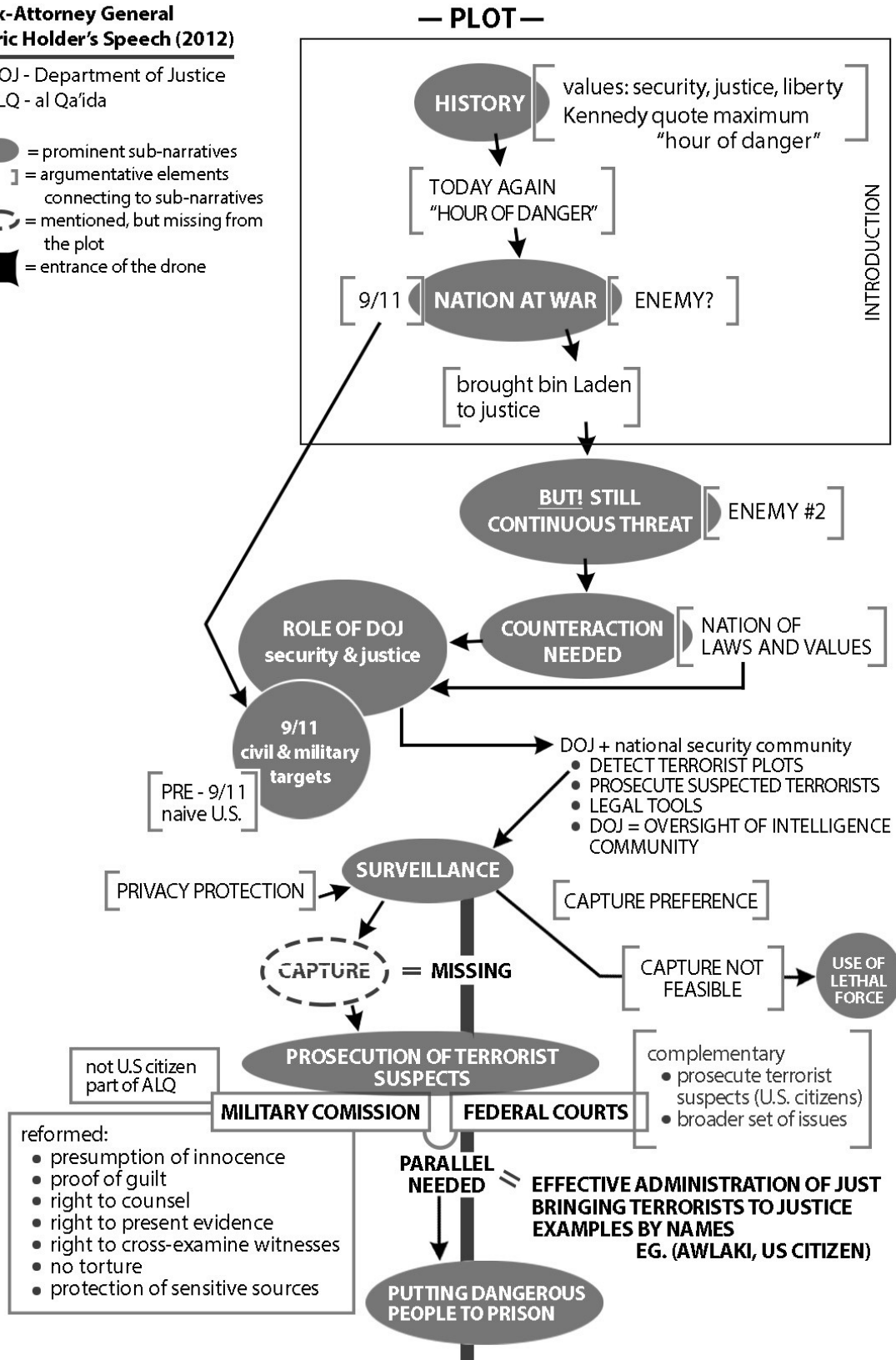


Figure 1.1. Plot of ex-Attorney General Eric Holder's speech (part I.)



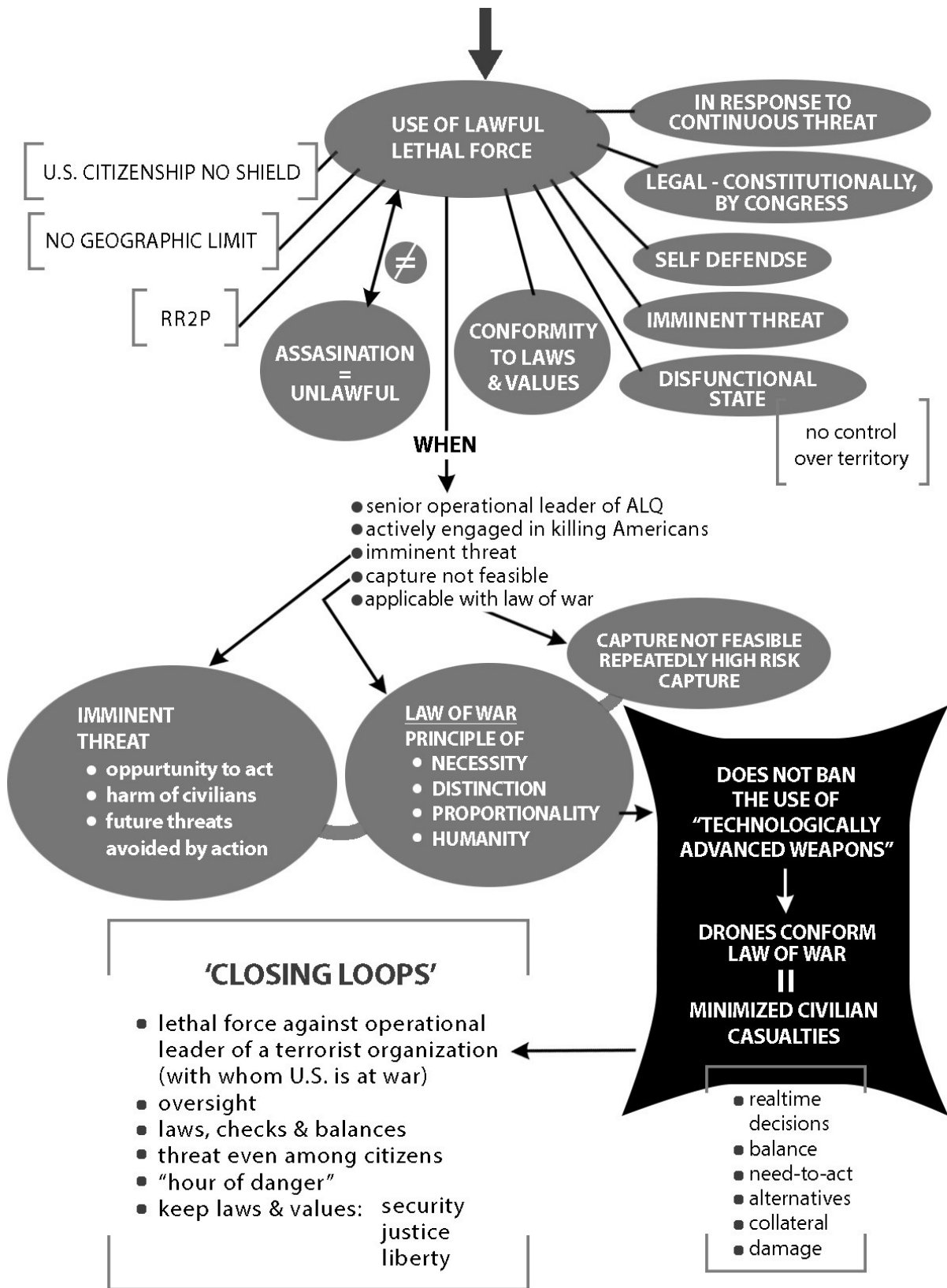


Figure 1.2. Plot of ex-Attorney General Eric Holder's speech (part II.)

### 5.1.2. Plot and Sub-narratives

The structure of ex- Attorney General Eric Holder’s speech starts with a general introductory part. He sketches the scene that provides a base for ongoing argumentation and sub-narratives. First, he begins with a retrospective encountering of United State’s relationship to dangers and conflicts. He outlines a history representing the American nation having to deal with larger or smaller threats “*since the country’s earliest days*” (HS p.1 #17)<sup>16</sup>. Then, the introduction of the recent situation takes place where the nation is in danger and at war. War is the basic setting in which all the characters act and all the actions occur. The brief introduction of the enemy, the villain, happens right after reminding the audience of wartime. The villain aims to kill American citizens, is determined and “*cannot be underestimated*” (HS p.2 #7-8) which adumbrates that certain counteractions should be taken against it. On the other side there is the hero, the current U.S. Administration at first place, who tries to prevent the enemy’s hostile actions and protect people.

#### SUB-NARRATIVE OF “NATION AT WAR”

An argument reminding the audience that the U.S. is currently in armed conflict is crucial, thus without an actual declaration of war, the argument for all the actions taken in overseas operations (the whole drone policy) would be hardly acceptable. The construction of the war setting begins with a short retrospective ‘reminder’, when Holder quotes J.F. Kennedy : “*In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger.*” (HS p.2 #1-2) For the U.S. danger is not an unknown phenomena and this time again the nation has to face it. How would a state have the right to intervene with any lethal force to another country’s territory, when that state is not in armed conflict at all? Even if the U.S. is not directly at war with one or more specific states, it is claimed to be at war with non-state actors. The “at war” status itself is the key. Holder right in the beginning of his speech clearly states that the United States is at war, however at that point he does not define clearly what he means by that. The nation at war narrative is structurally tied to other arguments. It is not simply stated that the U.S. is at war against the Taliban and al-Qa’ida since 2001, in this case it is elaborated step-by-step. After claiming first that the U.S. is at war, he ambiguously identifies the enemy.

**HS p.2 #7-8** „*We are a nation at war. And, in this war, we face a nimble and determined enemy that cannot be underestimated.*”

<sup>16</sup> Citation Key: (HS p.1 #17) – Holder Speech (HS) Page 1 (p.1) Line-number 17 (#17)  
I follow the same logic of in-text citations when referring to the speeches. Obama Speech (OS), Brennan Speech (BS)

In the following lines he recounts that they “brought justice” to Osama bin Laden, however that did not mean the end of the conflict. As he frames:

**HS p.2 #17-18** *“[...] there are people currently plotting to murder Americans, who reside in distant countries as well as within our own borders.”*

At that point we still ‘officially’ do not know who they fight against. 9/11 is used as a point of reference, he does not elaborate on what happened then, rather he builds on the audience’s certainly existing collective memory about the event. The specificity of this speech is that lot of space is dedicated to the ‘after capture’ processes (prosecutions etc.), which capturing practices had been greatly alternated by targeted killings. Nation at war narrative is interrupted and Holder rather elaborates on terror-prosecutions. Holder returns to the argument, when he introduces the use of targeted lethal force.

As the United States is in an armed conflict, it has the right to defend itself with the use of lethal force. At that point he identifies the enemy clearly, declares the President’s authority by Constitution to protect nation and raises attention to the inherent right of self-defense in wartime. The U.S. had to stay in war because the threat did not disappear and the right of self defense is valid in this unconventional war as well.

**HS p.15 #4-12** *“In response to the attacks perpetrated – and the continuing threat posed – by al Qaeda, the Taliban, and associated forces, Congress has authorized the President to use all necessary and appropriate force against those groups. Because the United States is in an armed conflict, we are authorized to take action against enemy belligerents under international law. The Constitution empowers the President to protect the nation from any imminent threat of violent attack. And international law recognizes the inherent right of national self-defense. None of this is changed by the fact that we are not in a conventional war.”*

9/11 as a point of reference and as part of the collective memory of the audience is also embedded in the introductory part. Certainly on purpose, because 9/11 terror attacks ensure the basis of legitimacy for all following compounds of the speech. However, 9/11 happened more than a decade ago and it is a commonsense that Osama bin Laden died since then. As Holder says, they “brought to justice bin Laden” (HS p.2 #14-18), but later on he warns that there are individuals who are still threatening the U.S. and its citizens. The villain is not dead with the death of bin Laden. The continuous presence of threat even after the death of the top al- Qa’ida leader provides a legitimate and legal basis for further counteractions.

*“I know that – more than a decade after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks; and despite our recent national security successes, including the operation that brought to justice Osama bin*

*Laden last year – there are people currently plotting to murder Americans, who reside in distant countries as well as within our own borders.”*

(HS p.2 #14-18)

Till that point, the plot is quite simple. In the next paragraph it is ‘spiced’ with American laws and values – 3 “founding” values were briefly enlisted at the beginning : security, justice, liberty – deeply embedded in the American national identity. This ‘spicing’ aims to further increase the audience’s interest about the topic, thus now larger causes are also included in the narrative. Not only are these values endangered, but any response given to the threat should be in accordance with these “*founding ideals*” (HS p.3 #6). These values are not elaborated here, his point is rather that the Administration has to stay true to these founding ideals during security efforts.

The plot back again to 9/11 which is not just the source of legitimacy in the structure but as I have remarked it is a point of reference too. Pre- and post-9/11 periods are distinguished, in order to represent how the situation has changed since that turning point. Pre-9/11 period is a less eager, more naive time in comparison to post-9/11 period when everything had to be re-thought and re-organized in order to deal with the new situation. Surveillance programs and the use of targeted lethal force are embedded in this new scene. The logic of the speech is to start with the ‘softer’ themes (surveillance, capture and prosecution) and continue with the ‘harder’ ones (use of lethal force). Furthermore, the argumentative structure of the speech follows the actual action-strand of ordering a drone-strike: surveillance – (capture) – prosecution – (if capture is not possible) – use of lethal force.

Even in case of softer topics, certain loops and repetitions occur. For instance, it is stressed that the actions are taken to counter the enemy and to ensure the safety of American people.

*“[...] to identify and implement the legal tools necessary to keep the American people safe.”*

(HS p.4 #19)

Legally, of course. Phrases such as “*checks and balances*”, “*oversight by Congress*” or “*protect the privacy and civil rights*” (HS p.5) all aim to argue for the legality of surveillance. To completely convince the audience, the example of section 702 from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act is also provided. The structure of the pro-surveillance argument is filled with positive ‘buzzwords’. These are followed by ‘real-life’ examples to further reinforce the message: ‘surveillance is quite unproblematic’.

How capturing actually takes place remains untold, it is missing from the story. Obviously, the storyteller has information about this piece as well, however it is probably too

problematic and could have destabilized the argumentative structure if told. There is a ‘skip’ in the plot, and the story continues with the prosecution of suspected terrorists. The structure of reasoning is similar to the one of surveillance. The argument for the prosecution of terrorist suspects by federal or military courts is reinforced by examples of past successes. To provide more credibility, the prosecuted individuals are named (eg. Richard Reid, Faizal Shahzad). Holder dedicates quite a lot of space to argue for the necessity of both military and civilian courts in terror-prosecutions. It has two functions. First, the speech was delivered at the Northwestern University of Law, where the audience is recipient for longer legal argumentation. Certainly they have more background knowledge of the American court system than ‘laypeople’, therefore elaborating more on prosecution makes sense in such setting. In this milieu legal reasoning catches the attention of the audience. The other function of it is the preparation of attendees for the use of lethal force part of the speech. The practice of prosecutions presumes that there are other means to settle issues than only targeted killings. Moreover, it also creates the sensation if someone is “*stopped*” (HS p.23 #8) by lethal force rather than capture and prosecution, there must have been a good reason for that. The quote that introduces the use of lethal actions reinforces this presumption.

*“Now, I realize I have gone into considerable detail about tools we use to identify suspected terrorists and to bring captured terrorists to justice. It is preferable to capture suspected terrorists where feasible [...] but we must also recognize that there are instances where our government has the clear authority [...] to defend the United States through the appropriate and lawful use of lethal force.”*

(HS p.14 #15-2)

#### **SUB-NARRATIVE OF “CAPTURE PREFERENCE”**

Even if the actual claim for capture preference comes only in the second half of the speech, before that point, the Attorney General exhaustingly explained what happens when a suspected terrorist is captured and “brought to justice”.

**HS p.14#16-18** *“It is preferable to capture suspected terrorists where feasible – among other reasons, so that we can gather valuable intelligence from them [...]”*

This preference is underpinned in the speech by the amount of time he dedicates for the legal processes a suspect must face. He explains the structure of the jurisdiction, that two types of courts function parallel (revised military commissions and federal civilian courts) in order to provide greater coverage of issues and more efficacy. In case of suspected terrorists, being militants and not civilians, the jurisdiction of a civilian court seems to be

controversial. How should they be treated then? In case of the use of lethal force they are militants, while in case of capture they are treated as civilians? Eric Holder provides a long explanation for that (eg.: partners are less likely to cooperate with military commissions, civilian courts cover broader set of issues etc.), and also ties this practice back to past precedents (eg.: Richard Reid attempted shoe bomber; Zacarias Moussaoui 9/11 conspirator were “brought to justice by federal civilian court (HS p.7 #12-14) Following the past precedent argument, he encountered the successes that the Obama Administration recorded in prosecutions.

Again, he enlists the examples with concrete names (eg.: Faizal Shahzad; Ahmed Ghailani; Daniel Boyd; Michael Finton) which strategy braces his argument with more credibility and convincing power. Closely related to his former reasoning, Holder mentions that with the capture of these individuals valuable information had been acquired.

**HS p.8 #3-7** *“While in custody, he provided significant intelligence during debriefing sessions with the FBI. He described in detail how he became inspired to carry out an act of jihad, and how he traveled to Yemen and made contact with Anwar al-Aulaqi, a U.S. citizen and a leader of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.”*

After the argument for the first steps of targeted strikes, with the quote from page 35, he arrives to the use of lethal force. He repeats already stressed phrases: targeted killing is a response, it is legal, U.S. is in armed conflict (at war). He adds the right of self-defense that is established under international and domestic law. The President’s right to protect nation in case of “*imminent threat*” (HS p.15 #10) is rooted in the Constitution. These inherent rights are valid, even if the U.S. is not in a conventional war. Not surprisingly, suggested by the setting as well, the whole argument for the use of targeted lethal force is basically a legal one. Even though it is influential, not only the place matters here. As I have briefly touched upon in the previous section, this speech was delivered to provide some kind of legal explanation for the drone-strike that killed Anwar al Awlaki U.S. citizen. Accordingly, the legality argument should be robust, plus we may expect that it is going to be extended to cover the case of U.S. citizens. It actually takes place after stressing a general legal reasoning.

At this point, interrupting the plot a bit, I represent how a sub-narrative for the *use of lawful lethal force* is constructed. It is deeply entangled with the flow of events, but could be treated as an individual unit, thus it provides a firm basis for future legality arguments.

## USE OF LAWFUL LETHAL FORCE

### INCLUDING “TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCE WEAPONS”

Even though there is a capture preference when it is not possible, it is not doubtful that the U.S. should and will use lethal force to protect American citizens. Holder follows the argument of the U.S. being at war, resulting that the use of lethal force is established both under international and domestic law. Moreover, any action taken by the United States is a “response” to the committed terror attacks of the past and to the not-yet-happened but possible attacks of the future (continuous threat by Taliban, al- Qa’ida and associates). The use of force should be “*necessary*” and “*appropriate*” (HS p.15 #6-7). Holder also clarifies the geographic constrains the use of lethal force has, which is basically zero.

**HS p.15#15-17** *“Indeed, neither Congress nor our federal courts has limited the geographic scope of our ability to use force to the current conflict in Afghanistan. We are at war with a stateless enemy, prone to shifting operations from country to country.”*

Since the United States has to fight against a non-state actor, it cannot ‘defend itself’ in a conventional way. Bombardments on the territories of those countries with whom the U.S. is officially not at war seem to be highly contestable. Therefore an argument for the legality of use of lethal force in these territories is crucial.

Drones strikes are not only taking place in Afghanistan, but in other countries as well. This geographical-legality argument is rooted in the identification of the villain/enemy. Who is the enemy? Is it Afghanistan? No, we already know that the enemy is al-Qa’ida and associated forces. Where is the enemy located? It is stateless, it shifts its operations from country to country. How can we defeat our enemy? Follow it. It is going to seek to do harm for the U.S. no matter where it is located. As it could be observed, the argument for geographic legality rests on Holder’s construction of the villain’s ‘fluid’ behavior. It seems to appear anywhere and adapt to anything.

In addition to that, the U.S. has the inherent right of self-defense. Moreover American government has the “*responsibility and right to protect*” (RR2P) (HS p.16 #1-2). However the U.S. is obliged to respect other states sovereignty.

**HS p.16#3-5** *„This does not mean that we can use military force whenever or wherever we want. International legal principles, including respect for another nation’s sovereignty, constrain our ability to act unilaterally.”*

On the other hand, this sovereignty is limited to the nation’s ability and willingness to act against those threats that target U.S. interests on its territory. If preventive actions are not taken by the ‘host-country’, the United States is going to intervene. Questions of state-sovereignty is closely tied to what I have discussed so far, geography. A state’s sovereignty is complete, only if it can take full control over its physical territory (Arnaud, 2009) If a state fails to do that, its sovereignty is curbed. Sovereignty is not omnipotent, a state can be constrained in this right.

Holder goes further and explains that it is completely lawful to use targeting practices in case of lethal actions. He ties this lawfulness to domestic and war-law, but also brings two past precedents as evidence: one from WWII and bin Laden’s case.

**HS p.16#13-15** *„In fact, during World War II, the United States tracked the plane flying Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto – the commander of Japanese forces in the attack on Pearl Harbor and the Battle of Midway – and shot it down specifically because he was on board.”*

**HS p.16#17-18** *“[...] the operation that killed Osama bin Laden, the same rules apply today.”*

In order to provide a contrast, Holder discusses the “unlawful killings” - assassinations as well. He clearly draws a sharp boundary between the current U.S. practices and assassinations, which are strictly banned by the Executive Order. Then again, the Attorney General repeats that the U.S. uses lethal force in self-defense, against al-Qa’ida leaders or associated forces who present imminent threat of violent action. The message here is that there is nothing illegal in preventing attacks that is ‘just self-defense’.

Following this thread, Holder continues to talk about ‘inborn villains’, U.S. citizens who pose threat to their own country. As I pointed out in the beginning, this speech was delivered in order to provide some legal explanation for the targeted killing of Anwar al Awlaki, U.S. citizen. This argument was expected.



**p.17 #13-14** *“Based on generations-old legal principles and Supreme Court decisions handed down during World War II, as well as during this current conflict, it’s clear that United States citizenship alone does not make such individuals immune from being targeted.”*

This non-immunity argument is embedded in a brief retrospective account, meaning that the U.S. faced the same concerns about citizenship before and there were cases when own citizens were killed in order to ensure state-security. This practice is not new. Of course, these individuals have the right to due process (but that is not necessarily judicial one).

In order to show how Holder stresses the key points of the lawful targeting of a U.S. citizen (and a non-U.S. citizen) I’ll use the following quote:

**p. 19 #4-12** *“Let me be clear: an operation using lethal force in a foreign country, targeted against a U.S. citizen who is a senior operational leader of al Qaeda or associated forces, and who is actively engaged in planning to kill Americans, would be lawful at least in the following circumstances: First, the U.S. government has determined, after a thorough and careful review, that the individual poses an imminent threat of violent attack against the United States; second, capture is not feasible; and third, the operation would be conducted in a manner consistent with applicable law of war principles.”*

This quote is so inclusive, that I will analyze it from different perspectives. It is not simply a summary, rather a set of synthesized meanings that should be dedicated more space to unpack.

What we may observe here is that even if the individual fits into the character of villain completely, it does not mean that his/her elimination is lawful. The enemy can be a senior operational leader engaged in planning to kill Americans, it is still not enough to eliminate him/her. S/he has to pose an imminent threat of violent action, his/her capture shall not be feasible moreover the eliminating operation itself has to conform to the law of war. Such argument implants a thought into the audience’s head of how difficult is being killed in a targeted action. What could be questioned here is when does an individual pose “imminent threat” (HS p.15 #10)? Holder has an explanation for that also.

**p.19#13-16** *“The evaluation of whether an individual presents an “imminent threat” incorporates considerations of the relevant window of opportunity to act, the possible harm that missing the window would cause to civilians, and the likelihood of heading off future disastrous attacks against the United States”.*

The imminent threat is constructed as someone who has opportunity to act, targets civilians and there is a possibility of a larger attack against the U.S. with his/her contribution. In order to further support why ‘stopping’ such persons is crucial, he comes up with the example of 9/11, also committed by people who could be today identified as imminent threats.

What else is problematic with these individuals is that they do not behave as militants, however it does not mean that they cannot cause huge destruction. Based on the constituted image of the threat, Holder claims straightforwardly that “*the Constitution does not require the President to delay action until some theoretical end-stage of planning*” (HS p.20 #3-4). Maybe that would be too late. The President shall not wait till “the precise time, place and manner of an attack become clear” (HS p.20 #4-5). He can act before, to prevent an action. This argument provides a legit explanation for the already ordered targeted kills, in spite of not having major attack on U.S. territory since 9/11.

As a final pillar of lawful use of lethal force, Holder turns to the law of war. Number one principle is the one of necessity, that requires the target to have definite military value, number two is the principle of distinction requiring that only lawful targets may be targeted intentionally. Number three is principle of proportionality that says collateral damage cannot exceed the military advantage and fourth one is principle of humanity that requires the avoiding of unnecessary suffering (HS p.20 #17- p.21 #7). What is interesting here are not the principles, but their explanations which are framed in a way that drone technologies seem to perfectly fit in. Right after, Holder states that:

**HS p. 21#8-9** “*These principles do not forbid the use of stealth or technologically advanced weapons*”

By mentioning that, Holder prepares a basis of future speeches for further discussion about the topic. If he as an Attorney General, as a head of the Department of Justice claims that nothing restricts the use of technologically used weapons, it is not only highly credible but a reference-point as well. Others may build on that statement, thus the ‘U.S. Head of Justice’ said publicly: drones are legal to use, no legal act says the opposite.

Now let me turn back to how “*use of lawful lethal force*” is constructed in the plot. Following from the nature of this war, where the enemy is nimble and stateless, geographically limitless actions are argued to be lawful, of course with the full respect of international legal principles (eg.: state-sovereignty). Targeting is also lawful both under U.S. law and law of war that is supported with a precedent from WWII. At this point, in order to strengthen more this general legality argument, assassination as an unlawful targeted murder is brought up. Here, Holder has the opportunity to repeat again that the U.S. government uses lethal force for self-defense and against al-Qa’ida or associated force leaders posing imminent threat. The ultimate conclusion of this general legality argument is clear: these targeted kills opposed to

assassinations are lawful, both under domestic and international law. What makes the situation more complicated and makes this general legality story worth to tell is the case of U.S. citizens. And here we have arrived to explanation of Anwar al Awlaki's targeted kill. He clearly states:

*„[...] United States citizenship alone does not make such individuals immune from being targeted.”*

(HS p.17 #13-14)

In such cases, Holder argues, balancing is important. Weighing private interest against government interest is at stake, where the government interest is obviously the 'larger cause' of protecting other innocent people. The decision over the targeted killing of an American citizen is told to be amongst the most serious issues, even if *“one intent on murdering Americans and has become an operational leader of al- Qa'ida in a foreign land”* (HS p. 18#17-18). The quoted phrase nicely represents how evil that person is constructed, someone who attempts to kill fellow citizens. But, the government still treats these cases with extraordinary care. In order to further ensure the audience that such cases are highly exceptional, with his brief summary that I have discussed before, Holder stresses how many things have to be realized at the same time to be targeted and killed as a U.S. citizen.

*“Let me be clear: an operation using lethal force in a foreign country, targeted against a U.S. citizen who is a senior operational leader of al Qaeda or associated forces, and who is actively engaged in planning to kill Americans, would be lawful at least in the following circumstances: First, the U.S. government has determined, after a thorough and careful review, that the individual poses an imminent threat of violent attack against the United States; second, capture is not feasible; and third, the operation would be conducted in a manner consistent with applicable law of war principles.”*

(HS p.19 #4-12)

Holder previously mentioned and now ties back again to the condition of “imminent threat”, but this time he elaborates on that. Imminent threat is connected to the 9/11 attacks, that were conducted with a *“little or no notice”* (HS p.19 #18). Connecting these two hides a message: if the Administration is not careful enough, another 9/11 may happen. And no one wants that, right? Continuous threat is also brought up, signing that the U.S. government has to be eager and able to respond quickly if necessary. He goes even further. In case of imminent threat, the President cannot wait till the precise time, place and manner of future attack becomes clear because it would result in an *“unacceptably high risk”* (HS p.20 #6). Capturing is not always feasible, and in such cases the possible violent attack should be

prevented with lethal force. The situation in which the U.S. government is forced to use targeted lethal action against an own citizen is represented as a dreadful one, in which without a quick response innocent American people would die. Even if the threat is real and everywhere, the U.S. government will still comply with law of war principles. And “technologically advanced weapons” comply with that. Not only comply, but also may help to provide the best planning of operations and minimized collateral damage at the same time. The 4 principles of law of war are enlisted with short explanations, which explanations nicely fit to what drone technologies actually do.

*“The principle of necessity requires that the target have definite military value. →(ensured by surveillance capacity) The principle of distinction requires that only lawful targets – such as combatants, civilians directly participating in hostilities, and military objectives – may be targeted intentionally. →(ensured by the manned targeting procedures) Under the principle of proportionality, the anticipated collateral damage must not be excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage. →(ensured by discriminative, selective targeting) Finally, the principle of humanity requires us to use weapons that will not inflict unnecessary suffering. →(ensured by precision)”*

(HS p.21 #1-7)

Holder actually puts these features over judicial process when it comes to taking lethal action. He highlights that “*Constitution guarantees due process not judicial process*”(HS p.21 #16-17). In case of a targeted action, decisions depend on the need to act, alternative options and the possible collateral damage (HS p.22 #2-3). The expert judgment takes these into consideration and ensures the due process without judicial process. Referring to the Due Process Clause this way aims to eliminate doubts about the legality of drone strikes without judicial process. Moreover, that the Executive Branch is under great oversight is repeated again. The oversight is ensured by the checks and balances and by the regular informing of the Congress.

In the final part of his speech, he partly summarizes the key points he encountered, partly repeats and stresses already negotiated issues and loops back to the fundamental American values of security, justice and liberty. He reminds the audience of the continuous threat that the U.S faces (even amongst own citizens). Holder warns that actions to stop them should be taken “in this hour of danger” (loop to the introductory part again). He repeats that these dangerous individuals seek to kill American citizens, and that their actions must be prevented. Similarly to the introduction it is stressed again that laws and values should be taken into consideration and shall not be violated in any situation (Constitution is a “compass” in the hardest times (HS p.23 #18). These values unite Americans into a nation,

they are sacred, their violation would result in a disaster. The closing part of the speech tries to exploit the American patriotism, the “we” sensation and national identity. Even those members of the audience will clap in the end of the speech, who partly or completely rejected Holder’s narrative. Because on these final lines every ‘true American’ can agree.

## **5.2. Analysis of John Brennan’s Speech**

### **5.2.1. Storyteller’s profile**

Who talks and from where?

The speaker is CIA Director John Brennan, in office from 2013 till 2017, under the second term of the Obama Administration. He was the chief counterterrorism advisor of President Obama, thus he had an oversight of all counterterrorism programs and actions (Gregory, 2011, p.241). Almost entirely sure that the main direction of the second term’s counterterrorism strategy was not only consulted with but also advised by him. As a result, he does not only stand for a governmental position on drone strikes but also for his own position. Based on this background knowledge, we may expect that he argues strongly for the drone and counterterrorism programs.

What is the purpose of this speech?

As the title says he mainly addresses the ethics and efficacy of counterterrorism strategy. Obviously, the aim of the speech is to argue for the elements of the strategy (including the use of targeted lethal force) and to convince the audience about their legality, control, ethics and necessity. What actually provoked the speech was a significant policy shift in the use of drone strikes. The CIA and the Joint Special Operations Command’s (JSOC) authority was expanded to fire on targets based on solely their detected patterns of behavior. This ‘patterns of life’ analysis means that if other intelligence is not available the drone operator may rely on solely the persistent monitoring of the target area or individuals (Krishnan, 2015, p.20). The practice of conducting drone attacks on persons whose identities are not known are called “signature strikes” (Krishnan, 2015, p.20). Legalizing signature strikes was a great extension of the category of “legal strikes”, thus before only known terrorist leaders on the CIA and JSOC target list could have been eliminated by drones strikes (Miller, 2012.).

ex - CIA Director John O. Brennan's speech on the "ethics & efficacy" of counterterrorism strategy (2012)

— PLOT —

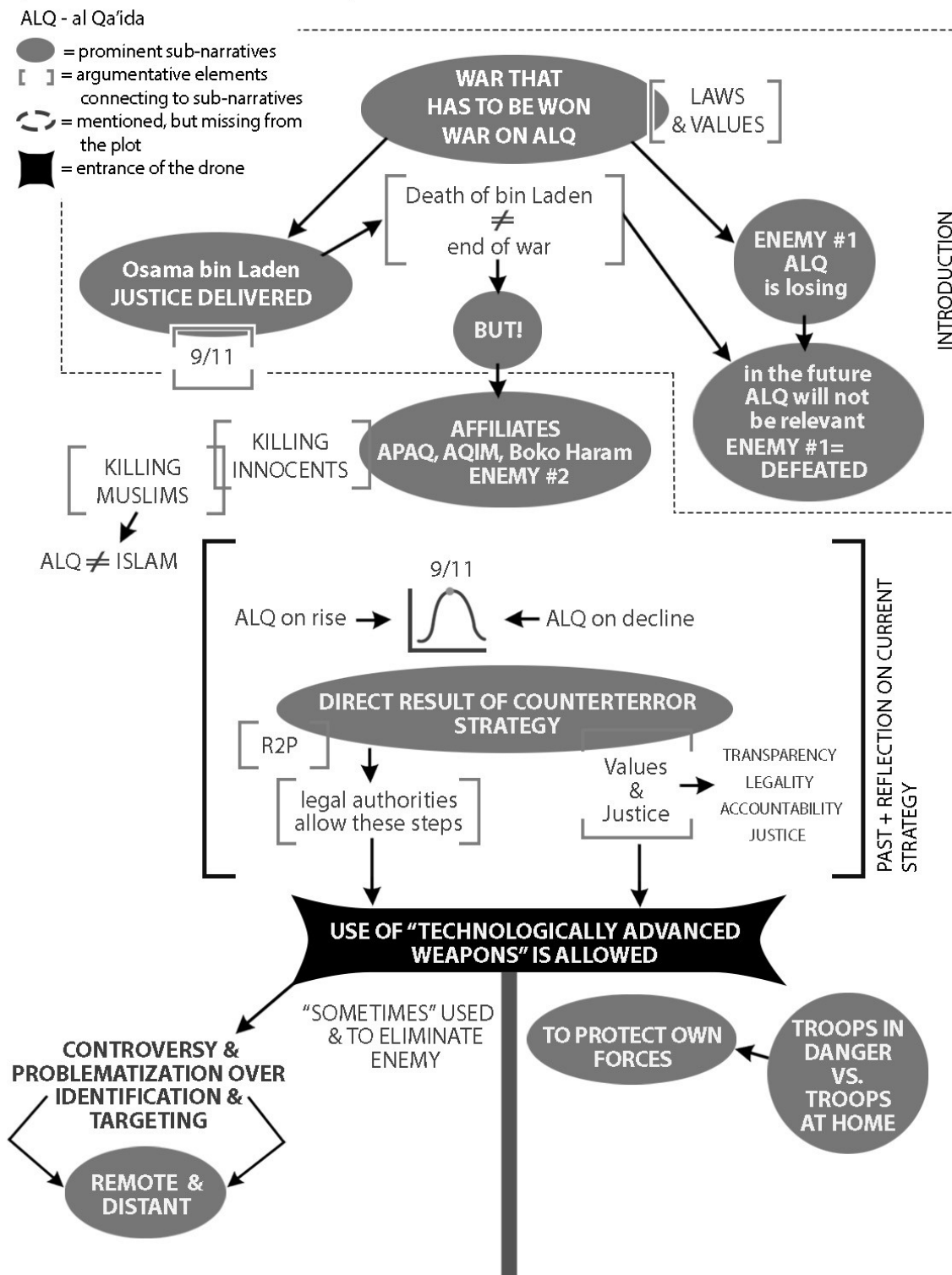


Figure 2.1. Plot of ex-CIA Director John Brennan's speech (part I.)

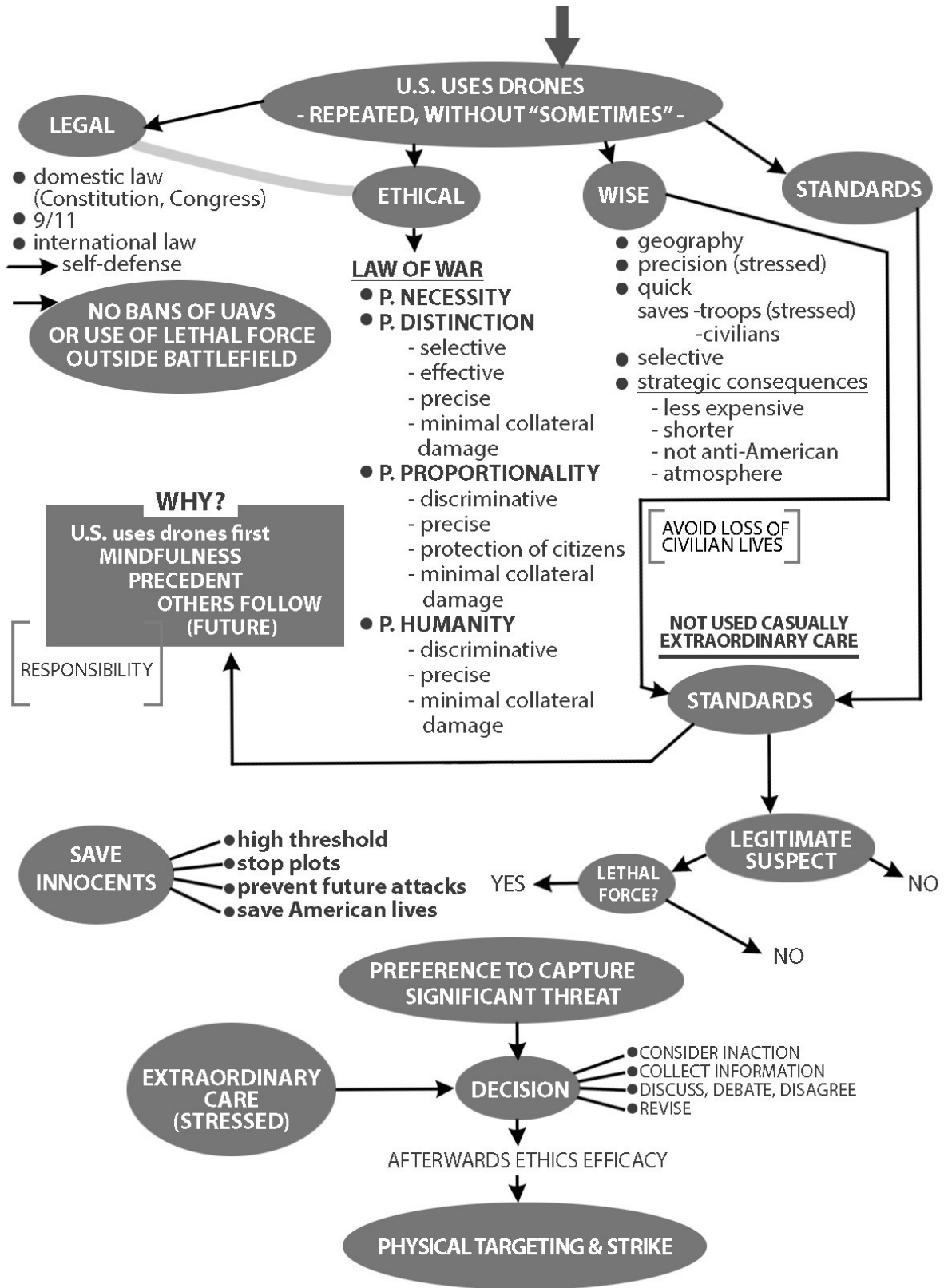
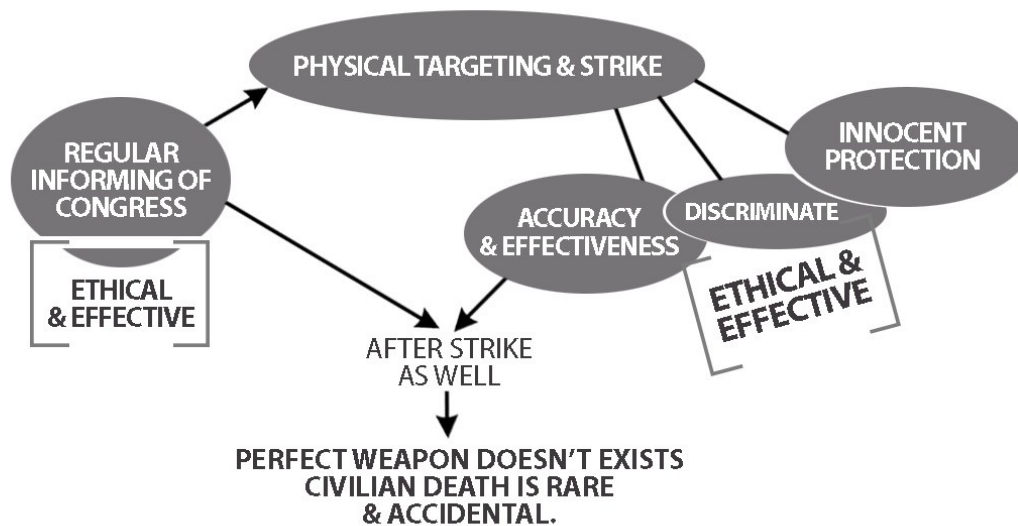


Figure 2.2. Plot of ex-CIA Director John Brennan's speech (part II.)



**KEY POINTS STRESSED**

**CLOSING LOOPS**

- summary legitimate target, significant threat, capture not feasible, checks to act in foreign territories, confidence in identifying target, civilians not harmed.
- U.S. = RESPONSIBLE EXAMPLE
- TRANSPARENCY
- DRONES = ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL
- WE ARE AT WAR - AGAINST ALQ - WAR = HELL
- TARGETED STRIKES STOPPED ALQ
- DISFUNCTIONAL STATE? > U.S. ACTS

Figure 2.3. Plot of ex-CIA Director John Brennan's speech (part III.)



How much does he know and what does he share?

Similarly to the other speeches, Brennan self-evidently knows far more than he can or he is willing to share. Claims about necessary secrecy in his speech also bear evidence of it. Based on his position and on the newly introduced policy shift it is reasonable to assume that he shares information that shows a nice picture of drone strikes and counterterrorism strategy, while he hides the less bearable ones.

### 5.2.2. Plot and Sub-narratives

Brennan starts with the introduction of what he is going to “discuss” in his speech, the ethics and efficacy of President Obama’s counterterrorism strategy. In this first part of the speech he ‘gives the floor’ to the President, by quoting him directly. The U.S. is at war against al-Qa’ida, at a war that has to be won. Obama ensures that this fight will be carried on in a manner that laws and values will be respected. However, the President is not hesitating to use military force against terrorists who pose threat on the lives of American people. And so he did. What we see here, is that Brennan puts the President as a responsible Commander-in-Chief to a central position, whose first and foremost aim is to protect American citizens by any means that respect laws and American values. He provides a framework for Obama’s actions by describing his high goals.

#### “THE WAR THAT HAS TO BE WON”

The fundamental assumption from which all the storylines derive is that the United States of America is at war against the Taliban, al-Qa’ida and its associated forces.

**BS p.2#4-5** [...] and refocus our efforts on "the war that has to be won"—the war against al- Qa'ida [...]

The war on terror, which naming has transformed recently in the political narratives to “war on al-Qa’ida” (BS p.2 #4), started after the terror attacks against the Twin Towers that had been committed on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001. A couple of days later the Authorization for Use of Military Force had been passed by the Congress in response to the attacks, which act allows the use of any necessary force against those who had a role in the 9/11 terror attacks. From that point of time, the U.S. is at war with a quasi stateless enemy. Not only is the enemy stateless, but it is also non-military in the traditional sense (U.S. military personnel does not face another army, rather individual terrorists who hide amongst the population). There may be bigger groups with whom U.S. troops have to deal, but still these forces are generally very sparsely located.

In case of the Brennan speech, the war setting in which the characters operate and arguments are built up is not constructed solely in the beginning rather along the whole speech. Let me provide an example from an ulterior part of the speech.

**BS p.32#3-8** *“But I am certain about one thing. We are at war. We are at war against a terrorist organization called al-Qa’ida that has brutally murdered thousands of Americans—men, women and children—as well as thousands of other innocent people around the world.”*

This quote is from the final part of the speech. Even though we know from the beginning that the U.S. is at war against al-Qa’ida, it was clearly repeated in the end as well.

One of the great successes of the Administration’s efforts is that *“justice has been finally delivered”* (BS p.2 #19) on Osama bin Laden, chief al-Qa’ida leader. Brennan reminds that bin Laden was responsible for 9/11 which is so to say a commonsense, and that his elimination put troops to extraordinary danger (this high risk is clearly unwanted). In the plot the elimination of bin Laden has two functions, first it represents a great success of the counterterrorism strategy, second it is a turning point but not the war turned to an end, rather the enemy turned to be different. Even if al-Qa’ida is weakened by the U.S. counterstrategy, there is a ‘BUT’. But affiliates. To be able to argue for why counterterrorism strategy is still needed a year after bin Laden’s death, the construction of a new enemy was necessary: they are the al-Qa’ida associated forces. In the war on terror, the U.S. obviously cannot remain alone. In the story we find two villains, a weakening one who is losing (al-Qa’ida) and another that is injured but still poses significant threat to the U.S. (affiliates). In this case, the hero (current U.S. Administration) faces continuously with a dispersed enemy of more smaller groups, some of them are more while others are less dangerous. Brennan to provide examples, names some of these forces: al-Shabaab, APAQ, AQIM and Boko Haram. Naming is a strategy used to ensure credibility, thus if one can name who the enemy is, that surely exists. The term “affiliates” in itself is too abstract for the audience, naming the groups is more concrete and creates reality-sensation.

Before continuing the construction of the new enemy, he makes a small evasion and distinguishes between the al- Qa’ida and the Muslim community. It is an important step, thus he represents the enemy not as a religious rather a secular one, moreover he emphasizes that Muslims are also victims of the attacks, more frequently than Americans. In order to outnavigate from voices claiming that the American counterterrorism strategy is conducted against Islam, he says:

*“To which I would add, that is because al-Qa’ida does not belong to Muslims. Al-Qa’ida is the antithesis of the peace, tolerance and humanity that is at the heart of Islam.”*

(BS p.7 #11-13)

By this claim, he defends the counterterrorism strategy and use of lethal force from being stamped as a sequence of operations against Islam.

After this bypass, he ties back to the affiliates, who pose a continuous threat and seek to kill American citizens. ‘Luckily’ al-Qa’ida is on decline, thanks to the efforts of the U.S. Administrations. In the pre-9/11 period, when U.S. was not aware of the threat (naïve) al-Qa’ida was on the rise. However after the terror attacks, when U.S. started responding, in the post-9/11 period al-Qa’ida is on the decline. The reason behind is the counterterrorism strategy, that put enemy #1 (al-Qa’ida) on the way of destruction. Consequently, the strategy is successful and should be continued against enemy #2 (affiliates) as well. The message is clear: ‘counterterrorism strategy must go on’.

## **NARRATIVE OF CONTINUOUS THREAT**

### **A FUTURE VISION**

After the death of bin- Laden, a story that justifies the ongoing war against al-Qa’ida is needed. This sub-narrative has two basic functions. First, it provides a legitimate basis for the counterterrorism actions (including the use of targeted lethal force) in the ‘post-bin Laden’ period. Second, it represents a future vision of permanent threat, whose attempts should be prevented and against whom the U.S. has to fight. These new villains (enemy #2) are the affiliates, which groups are continuously planning attacks on the U.S. and seek to harm and kill American citizens.

The sub-narrative of continuous threat stands parallel to the one of 9/11. However 9/11 took place more than a decade ago, bin Laden was “brought to justice” since then, therefore a supporting argument for the ongoing war (where drones are used) was needed.

The current threat of affiliates, is a not-ending one. Or at least, not in the near future. The term ‘continuous’ suggests something long-lasting. Even if it is argued that the al- Qa’ida is only a shadow of its former self and that probably it will not pose a relevant threat anymore in the future (BS p.5 #5-10) – this is a near-future perspective –affiliate groups, even if they are losing key figures as well, are still present (BS p.5 #12-14).

Despite of the security efforts, these affiliate groups are still threatening. Brennan encountered the most significant groups that seek to attack or do harm for the United States. He mentioned Al- Shabaab, APAQ, AQIM and Boko Haram that are all al- Qa'ida associated forces.

The counterterror-strategy is more mystified with the “American power” including the power of values and laws. It is a loop to the introductory part, when he said that the U.S. has to stay true to its fundamental values even in wartime. Transparency as a basic value of democratic accountability is brought up in the argument, in order to introduce debates already circulating about “technically advanced weapons”. Debating means transparency and openness and vice versa in this context. By enlisting and encountering the debates about drone technologies (starting with Attorney General Holder’s speech) he creates the sensation that this topic has been widely discussed with the public, and only a couple of issues were neglected that raised questions in the people. Now he is going to address these problematic issues, to contribute to the wider debate.

While identifying the controversy or problem, he clearly states that it is not about whether to use such technologies or not. According to Brennan it is clear that American people want that. He sees rather the questions of remote identifying and targeting with lethal force as problematic. He clearly delineated the problem and aims to address it. Why is it important to talk about this issue other than transparency? In order to explain that, he uses a quote from Jack Goldsmith, a former Attorney General.

*“The government needs a way to credibly convey to the public that its decisions about who is being targeted — especially when the target is a U.S. citizen — are sound.... First, the government can and should tell us more about the process by which it reaches its high-value targeting decisions...The more the government tells us about the eyeballs on the issue and the robustness of the process, the more credible will be its claims about the accuracy of its factual determinations and the soundness of its legal ones.”*

(BS p.11 #4-12)

A trained STS eye immediately spots what is called *deficit model* (Wynne, 1982) within the discipline. The more people know about an issue, the more they are going to support it. People have concerns about drone technologies, because they do not understand them. Providing more information of drones would result in higher levels of acceptance. Brennan claims, that this is the reason why he is delivering this speech. He is motivated by this linear

model of understanding. He constructs all public refusal of drone technologies as a result of fear evoked secrecy, that has eroded credibility. From an STS point of view we know that people do not simply not understand an issue when they are seen to disregard it; they do not recognize it, or identify with it, morally speaking. Acceptance is not so much about public capabilities of understanding technical information, but about the trust and credibility (Wynne, 1992, p.282).

And this is the point, where actually the drone 'lands' in the discussion. Brennan admits the use of drones in overseas operations, but in accordance with law, to prevent terror, to save American lives, on al- Qa'ida terrorists and only "*sometimes*" (BS p.10 #7). In the following section, he aims to contribute to the debates on legality, ethics, wisdom and standards (this creates the feeling of openness, thus these debates are 'already existing'). Even without a deeper analysis, simply based on the phrases (legality, ethics, wisdom, standards) one may realize what these sub-narratives do and why they are here. They all serve to convince the audience about the use of remotely piloted aircraft technologies in military operations. Basically they are adds to the pro-drone narrative. Let me open the 'box of hows', how Brennan constructs drones as legal, ethical and wise technologies to opt for.

### **NARRATIVE FOR DRONES**

Brennan first calls remotely piloted aircraft technologies as technically advanced weapons, rather than drones. If one calls a device, especially in case of weapons, technically advanced that always holds a positive connotation. Advanced means that it is more developed, than other casually used weapons, it is quasi a new generation of weapons. One may also expect that an advanced technology is not only better but maybe more special than another. During his speech Brennan actually names these technologies as drones only once, when he mentions that they are publicly referred as such. But not anymore. In generally speaking the term drone carries some negative associations, thus using a more positive naming could be a good strategy to take when arguing for the legality, ethics and wisdom of their use.

#### **○ SUB-NARRATIVE OF LEGALITY**

First of all, he starts the legality argument with a retrospective account, highlighting that other people such as Attorney General Eric Holder or Harold Koh and Jeh Johnson have already addressed the question of legality, and they claimed the use of drones to be legal in length. Similarly to the Obama speech, the legality of a weapon should rest on the

principles of international and domestic law. It must conform to both at the same time, so the relationship is not an 'or' rather an 'and' one. In the domestic realm, the number one pillar of legality is the Constitution that empowers the President to protect his nation. The second pillar is the already mentioned Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) passed by the Congress in 2001. The AUMF authorizes the President to use any necessary forces to protect national security and it does not include any geographical or technical restrictions (of course except for those which are already strictly banned by international law: use of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons). 9/11 is the temporal point legitimacy. The terror attacks of 2001, September provoked series of counter-actions that will not come to an end till the non-state threat is present. Similarly to the Holder and Obama speeches, Brennan also ties back every counterterrorism action to 9/11, mainly because the terror attacks left so deep and still unhealed wound in the American national identity and collective memory. Consequently, it can be used still successfully to justify arguments. Let me take a short bypass on this.

#### **SUB-NARRATIVE OF 9/11**

##### **COLLECTIVE MEMORY**

Similarly to the other speeches, September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, is the basic pillar of any pro-drone narrative in the wider political discourse. 9/11 provides the basis of legitimacy for any action, thus the United States is at war or armed conflict with the Taliban, al- Qa'ida and associated forces because of the terror attacks against the World Trade Center. Without 9/11 the whole argumentation would collapse, a continuous reference to that is essential to build up the narratives. 9/11 is not just the evident and unquestionable source of legitimacy, but it is also represented as a temporal turning point, dividing the post Cold War period to pre- and post- 9/11 segments. This temporal division characterizes both the Brennan and Obama speeches, but pre-9/11 period was described by Holder as well.

Turning back to the point of legality, seemingly there are three things ensuring that the use of drones does not violate domestic law. Constitution, the founding document, is not violated thus it authorizes the President (Executive Branch) to protect the nation. AUMF directly authorizes the response steps against al- Qa'ida and the Taliban, which act was passed by the democratically elected Congress. The approval of Congress means that a

decision was made completely democratically, which does not only fit to the legality but to the moral argument as well, thus democracy is one of the fundamental American values.

Regarding international law, Brennan also brings up the case of national self-defense. It is an inherent right of each country according to the international law. Thus, U.S. is claimed to be in armed conflict with the Taliban, al- Qa'ida and its associated forces because of the 9/11 attacks. In international law, there are no bans of unmanned aerial vehicles or use of lethal force against enemies outside the battlefield.

**BS p.13#17-18** *“There is nothing in international law that bans the use of remotely piloted aircraft for this purpose or that prohibits us from using lethal force against our enemies outside of an active battlefield”*

An interesting argumentative strategy has been chosen here *“everything which is not forbidden is allowed”* (Andenæs, Fairgrieve, 2000, p.256). In principle bans should be included in legal acts, so if an area is not regulated – RPA's use in operation – than basically restrictions do not exist on that area yet. Therefore this point of the legality argument is quite strong, currently no existing legal act limits or bans the use of RPAs. This reasoning is unshakeable.

#### ○ SUB-NARRATIVE OF ETHICS

Interestingly, even though he argues for ethics, Brennan ties back to the legality argument of international law, more precisely law of war. The whole narrative of ethics in the speech is based on that. The problem with this strategy is that legality may be used as a source of ethics, however what is legal is not necessarily ethical. In his argument for ethics, he encounters the four basic principles of the law of war.

Principle of necessity is claimed to be fulfilled in case of targeting terrorists, thus U.S. targets only Taliban, al-Qa'ida or associated force members, with whom the nation is in conflict. As a result these targets are legitimate military targets.

Principle of distinction, meaning that civilians should be protected, is easily argued to be fulfilled with the general elements of the pro-drone narrative. RPAs fit in because they are precise, therefore they minimize collateral damage. Drones are selective, discriminate thus effective in protecting innocents while eliminating harmful individuals. The precision of RPAs is one of the most frequently used arguments for them. Not surprisingly that it is used to justify their conformity to the principle of distinction and

Principle of proportionality is focused on the balance of losses and military advantages. In the pro-drone narrative, closely connected to the principle of distinction, because of their precision and discriminate way of targeting RPAs are represented as the best possible tools to conduct counterterror actions (“*hard to imagine a tool that can better minimize collateral damage*” BS p.15 #7-8). Protection of innocents is the key feature of discriminative killings. Saving innocent lives is generally paired with selective and precise way of targeting plus the pro-surveillance narrative. ‘Innocent’ is a quite inclusive term (it can refer to both American and Muslim persons) it holds more positive meaning than the term civilian. With the word innocence one may connect purity, someone who is not guilty. One may more often associate innocents with children and women than civilians. Civilians are just non-military persons, they may be guilty anyways. Killing accidentally innocents is something clearly unwanted, while for example collateral damage may be ambiguous, more impersonal plus it can refer to non-human things as well (eg.: buildings). Innocence refers to human beings. Protection of innocents is not only used to support the ethical argument, but also to reinforce the sensation of extraordinary care and high standards, which will be discussed later. I made this small by-pass because the use of the term innocence reinforces the need for selectivity and precision.

Principle of humanity is supported by the very same argument. Selectivity and precision seems to be an all-in-one argumentative solution for any concerns regarding military drone technologies. The conclusion of this section is that the use of drones is ethical and just.

#### ○ **SUB-NARRATIVE FOR WISDOM**

The wise argument is first and foremost supported by the already well known “*astonishing*” precision (BS p.16 #2) of drones. The focus is on saving American troops, pilots and civilians through selective targeting. Due to the long surveillance hours, it is possible to get a clearer image, therefore less civilian death is probable. The temporal advantage of drones is also highlighted, that they enable the operator of quick response, so the opportunity of elimination is less likely to lose. To represent the situation more sharply, Brennan uses the medical metaphor of cancer, where the civilians are the healthy tissue and terrorists are the cancerous tumors among them that have to be cut out with surgical precision. Similarly to the case of tumors, drone’s precision is essential to fight against al-Qa’ida and associate forces. Brennan also raises attention to the strategic consequences. It is argued, that countries are generally hostile with foreign soldiers, ground troops. Moreover the deployment of ground troops is expensive, costly, long and may cause anti- American atmosphere.



Drones also have the advantage of precision compared to regular ground troops. Hostility, risk of troops safety and the possible anti-American effect of a ground troop intervention was encountered in the presidential speech as well.

To sum it up, the argument for wisdom is built up as the following:

**DISTANCE – GEOGRAPY**  
DRONE = ASTONISHING SURGICAL PRECISION

**TIME**  
DRONE = QUICK

**DANGER**  
DRONE = PRECISE AND DISCRIMINATIVE,  
ESSENTIAL  
HELPS AND SUPPORTS TROOPS  
PROTECTS CIVILIANS AND INNOCENTS  
PILOTS ARE IN SAFETY

**STRATEGIC CONSEQUENCES**  
COMPARED TO GROUND TROOPS, GT ARE:  
EXPENSIVE, LONG, MAY CAUSE ANTI-  
AMERICAN ATMOSPHERE

Parallel to the sub-narratives of legality, ethics and wisdom, the ‘original topic of the speech’ – discussion of ethics and efficacy – is also realized. How does Brennan combine ethics and efficacy, these two seemingly distinct phenomena? How does he construct efficacy and how is that related to ethics at all?

Ethics is a very fluid phenomena. Is efficacy necessarily ethical? We would not say so. If something is legal is it surely ethical? Depends, but not clear though. In the speech legality and efficacy merges into ethics that clearly weakens the ethical argument of the story. Let me provide an example from what we have seen so far. When Brennan starts to elaborate on that “*drone strikes are ethical*” (BS p.14 #3) he continues with the conformity of strikes to the law of war, which is a more legal than ethical argument. One may certainly argue that ethics are embedded in the law of war, without any doubt this is the case. However can we really treat the two as the same? Is proportionality principle ethical, when it prescribes that “*the anticipated collateral damage of an action cannot be excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage*” (BS p.15 #4-5) Who decides what the military advantage is? Is it ethical to kill innocent children if it does not exceed the anticipated military advantage, whatever it

means? Or the principle of humanity, which is probably the closest to ethics, claiming that weapons should not cause unnecessary suffering. And unnecessary death?

But how is ethics and efficacy combined within the speech? One of the most significant ties among the two are the “high standards” and “high bar”, that these strikes are not conducted “casually” (BS p.17 #10). Keeping high standards not only provides an example for other nations, a precedent for the future of drone warfare, but it also ensures that strikes are conducted in an effective and ethical way. It is neither effective nor ethical to kill each and every member of al-Qa’ida, rather these strikes are ordered with an “extraordinary care” (BS p.17 #13). This is what the high standard process serves.

*“There are, after all, literally thousands of individuals who are part of al-Qa’ida, the Taliban, or associated forces—thousands. Even if it were possible, going after every single one of these individuals with lethal force would neither be wise nor an effective use of our intelligence and counterterrorism resources.”*

(BS p.20 #14-18)

*“We do not engage in lethal action in order to eliminate every single member of al-Qa’ida in the world.”*

(BS p.21 #10-11)

Lethal force is used only, when an individual’s actions pose real threat and his/her elimination would provide more security for the United States. He calls that “*significant threat*” (BS p.21 #8), and also explains what he means by that. A significant threat is defined as an operational leader, an operative or an individual with unique operational skills of al-Qa’ida or associated forces, who are preparing to carry out an attack against U.S. interests. The drone strike conducted on a significant threat is a preemptive one, to stop these individuals before they kill innocents. Lethal force should be used only when capture is not feasible. This argument seems to be more fitting to the category of ethics than what was constructed under the ‘ethics sub-narrative’. A preemptive strike is ethical, because innocents are saved, a terror attack is prevented and for the same reason it is effective as well. Effective in terms of eliminating a significant threat therefore saving innocent lives or avoiding future attacks. Tying back to the argument of Brennan’s introduction, it is effective because the elimination of key figures of al-Qa’ida and associates further weakens these groups and reduces their capability of posing real danger to U.S. and other innocent citizens.

## **SUB-NARRATIVE OF EXTRAORDINARY CARE**

### **HIGH STANDARDS**

### **FUTURE VISION**

Drone strikes are not conducted in a causal manner, quite the opposite, they are operated with extraordinary care along strict frameworks, which is quite the antithesis of causality. There are high-standards that have to be carefully followed and kept during the whole process or ordering a strike against a terrorist suspect. According to the narrative, keeping these high standards represent the huge difference between U.S. and those against whom they fight. The enemy does not follow any rules, while America keeps international and domestic law, law of war and the high standards of drone operations at the same time. According to Brennan keeping standards is equally strength and responsibility. The U.S. is the first to use these technologies in combat, however other nations also own RPAs. Mindfulness in the use of such technology is crucial, because the U.S. creates the precedent that will be followed by other states in the future.

This argument builds on the logic of effect and counter-effect. Keeping rules and being mindful has its future benefits. The future of drone-wars is shaped by the U.S., which assures that standards are 'surely' kept by the national security team members. High standards are paddled several times, giving to it extra emphasis. The argument of the employed high standards in order to provide an example for others is a clear evidence, that remotely piloted aircraft technologies are desired to be used in the future but within a broader circle. Not only the U.S. but other countries' use of drones in combat is envisioned. This possible future is not represented as a dystopia or something clearly unwanted. Rather it is something that cannot be avoided, and will surely happen. Drones are going to be used in future warfare, the question is how? In order to minimize and dissolve uncertainties, high standards should be followed and kept.

As part of the narrative the process of targeting itself (of course to a limited extent) is described. Thus the aim of the argument is to prove that drone strikes are conducted with extraordinary care, an insight to the complexities of the chain of actions is described. The process is built up of nearly uncountable steps and loops, numerous questions have to be taken into consideration before an actual target is eliminated. The long story of how an individual becomes a person who is identified to pose imminent threat therefore should be eliminated, ensures the sensation of control and reasonability.

Because the suspect has to pass so many steps before a targeted kill is conducted on him or her, the audience may feel that the process is strictly controlled, several times double-checked and not based on prejudices. The person is continuously tracked, several aspects are taken into consideration and more importantly there is a ‘way back’. If any of the targeting conditions is not true for that particular person (eg.: s/he is member of the al-Qa’ida, but s/he is not in planning attack against U.S. or partners) the process should come to an end. Consequently, one may not only interpret the process as highly controlled, but also reasonable. If a suspect goes along the whole complex process and in the end of the day s/he is found to be a legitimate target that person has to be eliminated. It cannot be accidental, there must be serious issues behind. It is also briefly mentioned, that there is a “high bar” to identify if the targeted person is really the one they are looking for. However because of national security issues it is only hinted that this bar is based on certain intelligence sources and methods.

In the following table, I represent the decision-making process as Brennan described:

<b>SUSPECT</b> (name into consideration, careful review, evaluation)	
<b>LEGITIMATE TARGET?</b>	
<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Should we use lethal force?	end of discussion
<b>PREFERENCE = CAPTURE</b> <b>when not feasible, lethal force</b>	
There are more thousand al- Qa’ida members and Taliban hunting all is not effective or wise. YES if: the individual’s activity rises to a certain threshold of action; it poses threat to U.S. interests.	
Why? To stop plots, to prevent future attacks, to save American lives	
When? In case of significant threat: operation leader, operative training for attack, person with unique operation skills	
<b>DECISION</b>	
Considering information, consequences, carefully and responsibly	
Intelligence information in decision-making: collecting additional, refinement, challenging information	
Listen to national security team: discuss, debate, disagree, consider costs of inaction and the effect on the relationship with other countries, continuous revisiting	

As mentioned before, this openness is part of the argumentative strategy and greatly builds on the concept that we call deficit model in STS (Wynne, 1982). Brennan provides information in order to gain support, because any hostility against RPA technologies is rooted in the lack of information about them and their operative processes. The belief that if audiences understand and know more about a technology will automatically support it, is not enough in itself. Openness here is not purely about information transit, it ties back to the core American value on which the whole narrative is based: democracy. Not only Congressional approval ensures democratic decision-making, transparency and openness are equally important.

Quite obviously, legality argument is present in the extraordinary care narrative. Brennan ties back to the legal basis that allows targeting of certain individuals. Self-defense provided by the international law, and AUMF from the domestic realm. However, the high standards of decision making is that provides the extraordinary nature of carefulness. It allows less than the legal framework: *“Even if we determine that it is lawful to pursue the terrorist in question with lethal force, it doesn’t necessarily mean we should”* (BS p.20 #14-15)

### **PROTECTION OF INNOCENTS**

The narrative of extraordinary care also covers the issue of innocents and possible collateral damage. According to the narrative, there should be always a high degree of confidence (or as it was framed in the Obama speech “near certainty”) that no innocent civilians will be killed or injured. Here the focus is on the selective targeting capability of the technology and on its precision, due to the longer targeting times these advanced weapon allows. Thus RPAs are more precise, therefore more discriminate, it is more likely to avoid any collateral damage. Furthermore, Brennan ties back to the decision-making process (whether to conduct a strike or not) he highlights that there have been examples, when strikes were not conducted in order to protect civilians nearby. Even if the legitimate target fled. Not only is it extraordinary in terms of care but in terms of law as well, because even the international law does not require such level of care on the battlefield. Here, Brennan put the level of drone operation standards higher, than a legal regulation in force. ‘Ordinary’ care based on the international law, would allow civilian loss on the battlefield during an operation. In the ‘ordinary’ care situation, combatant is not required to miss a target or let it flee just because civilians are nearby. However, in case of drone strikes, the “extraordinary care” provides an exceeded protection for local civilian population. (One thing is missing from the narrative though, the unconventional, highly asymmetrical characteristic of drone strikes that the enemy does not have the possibility to strike back, while in case of “typical battlefield” is does).

An open space is left here for those exceptionally rare cases when despite the extraordinary care civilian death happens. Brennan admits that it does happen, but only accidentally because no perfect weapon exists. Moreover, the United States is at war, and as he frames “*war is hell*” (BS p.32 #14) that means humans are killing humans and sometimes innocents as well. If that happens, it is painful and regrettable and has to be taken seriously. Improvements to avoid civilian death should be worked out and this is what they do. At that point, as a general rhetoric strategy, he ties back to the American values, that the efforts they make to avoid civilian loss is a reflection of those basic values.

Ethics and efficacy is also combined when the discussion comes to the targeting procedures. Careful targeting and the precision of the technology provide the selective and discriminative characteristic of drone strikes that is ethical, because it minimizes collateral damage, but effective as well, thus it still eliminates dangerous individuals. The ethics of targeting is ensured by the challenging of intelligence capabilities and also by the consideration of costs of INaction. If it is nearly sure that the targeted individual is the one they are looking for, and the costs of INaction are high (lot of innocents die if they do not strike) it is both ethical and effective to act. There is a very “*high bar*” (BS p.27 #1), there must be a high degree of confidence that the targeted individual is the pursued terrorist. Not only is there a high bar, but if civilians are around it is possible that they would decide against conducting a strike, even if the targeted individual flees. He also claims that there have been precedents for this. This further reinforces the ethical argument of the “effective” strikes and counterterrorism strategy. As he frames:

*“And I would note that these standards—for identifying a target and avoiding the loss of innocent civilians—exceed what is required as a matter of international law on a typical battlefield.”*

(BS p.28 #1-2)

He continues his argumentation with post-strike actions, when they still ensure accuracy (from which ethics derive) and effectiveness. Brennan highlights, that after the strike if the mission achieved its goal is checked and also they try to determine whether there was collateral death or not (BS p.28 #4-9). If there was, that could have happened accidentally thus none of the weapons is perfect and RPA technologies are no exception. If collateral damage is identified, it is taken seriously and further efforts are put in preventing it to happen next time.

Another issue where he combines ethics and efficacy is the regular briefing of Congress about counterterrorism programs. According to him, the programs have grown more effective (including use of lethal force) as a result of oversight and dialogue.

In the final part of the speech he summarizes and stresses his key arguments plus ties back to the introductory part. The purpose of repetition is to remind the audience of the simplified 'message' he wants to transmit through the speech. These are the key points that should be kept in mind, and not forgotten by those who came to the Woodrow Wilson Centre to listen to his speech and by those who will listen it later.

He summarizes the standards of decision-making about a drone strike with the following keywords: legitimate target, significant threat, capture is not feasible, checks to act on foreign territory, confidence in the identity of the target, civilians will not be harmed, additional review in case of U.S. citizens. He also stresses that processes are continuously improved and kept in order to show example for other nations. He emphasizes the importance of transparency, and ensures that counterterrorism tools "*do not exist in a vacuum*" (BS p.31 #7-8). He also further stresses that RPAs are absolutely essential to protect the country, leaving no option of not using them once they have it.

Tying back to the introduction, Brennan reminds that America is at war and once again portrays the enemy, al-Qa'ida that is vicious, brutal and glad to murder American citizens if it has the opportunity. They are weakened with the help of targeted strikes, drone technologies pushed them to the road to destruction. With this, he once again attempts to convince the audience that there is very simply a need for the technology. It was the effective tool to hold al-Qa'ida back. On the other hand, drone strikes may cause collateral damage, but "*war is hell*" (BS p.32 #14), and in war people die. Sometimes civilians as well. The short message here is that collateral damage is not a specificity of drones but war, this is what the audience has to remember for. In the very final part, he ensures that everything will be done to protect American citizens from threat, of course till it fits to the framework of laws and American values.

## 5.3. Analysis of Barack Obama's Speech

### 5.3.1. Storyteller's profile

Who talks and from where?

The speaker is the United States President Barack Obama, in office for two terms from 2009 till 2017. The drone program greatly intensified after he took office. When the speech was delivered, Obama was in the most powerful position of the United States, his discussion of military drone technologies not only has an echo in homeland, but in the international community as well. As a Commander-in-Chief, who regularly orders unmanned airstrikes in overseas operations, the only position he can take is the full support of the drone program with as many rhetoric tools as possible. Among the analyzed 3 speeches this one is the most inclusive, which structural feature justifies, that President Obama aims to defend his position to the greatest possible extent. As a top political leader in position, the President cannot allow to leave uncertainties about his decisions behind, especially in an as sensitive issue as war. Hesitation about the already taken actions, whether they are ethical, legal or necessary etc. in this speech is not possible. It would destabilize the whole counterterrorism strategy including the use of lethal force and also his character as the U.S. President.

What is the purpose of this speech?

The purpose is to discuss the President's counterterrorism and drone policy in broadly speaking, however the actual aim is to convince the audience that the threat U.S. faces can be stopped and eliminated best by the use of unmanned aircraft technologies. From the already discussed context part it is known that it was the first greater speech on counterterrorism policy of his second term, and was delivered one day after the passing of "*Presidential Policy Guidance on Procedures for Approving Direct Action against Terrorist Targets Located Outside the United States and Areas of Active Hostilities*". This guidance provides a framework for the already working drone program. In other words, the regulation was the second in chronological order and not the actual decision on their use in combat (how it should not happen in a normal case). Such step could have provoked loads of questions in the wider social arena, averting this a speech immediately had to be delivered by the 'most credible' person, the U.S. President.

How much does he know and what does he share?

Similarly to the other speeches, it is quite obvious that the President knows much more than he shares. What he shares is closely tied to the purpose of the speech, those details are told that can be used to support his line of argumentation and a greater narrative for the use of military drone technologies in overseas operations.



**Ex-President Barack Obama's speech on U.S. drone and counterterrorism policy (2013)**

DOJ - Department of Justice  
ALQ - al Qa'ida

- = prominent sub-narratives
- [ ] = argumentative elements connecting to sub-narratives
- = entrance of the drone

**— PLOT —**

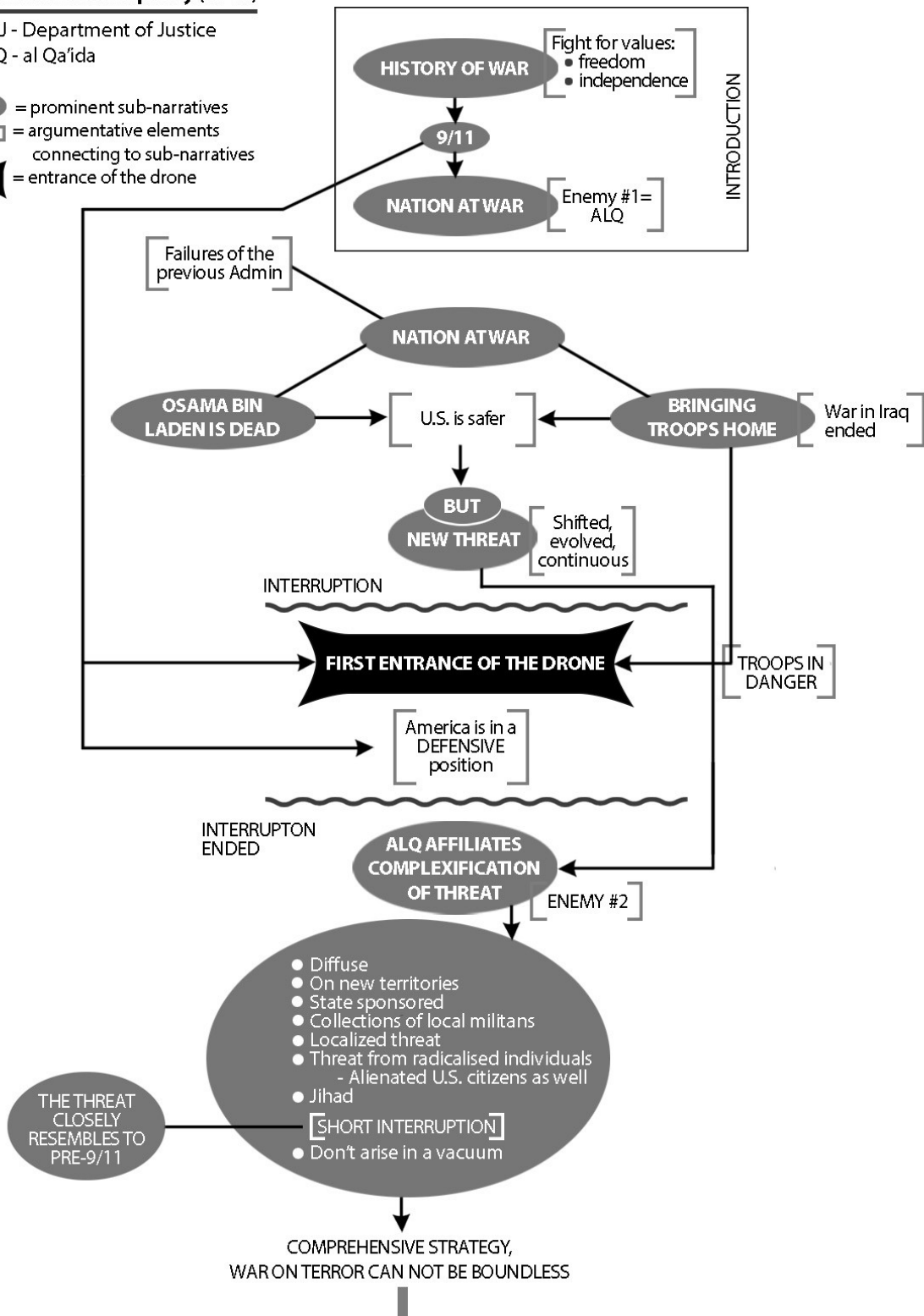


Figure 3.1. Plot of ex-U.S. President Barack Obama's speech (part I.)

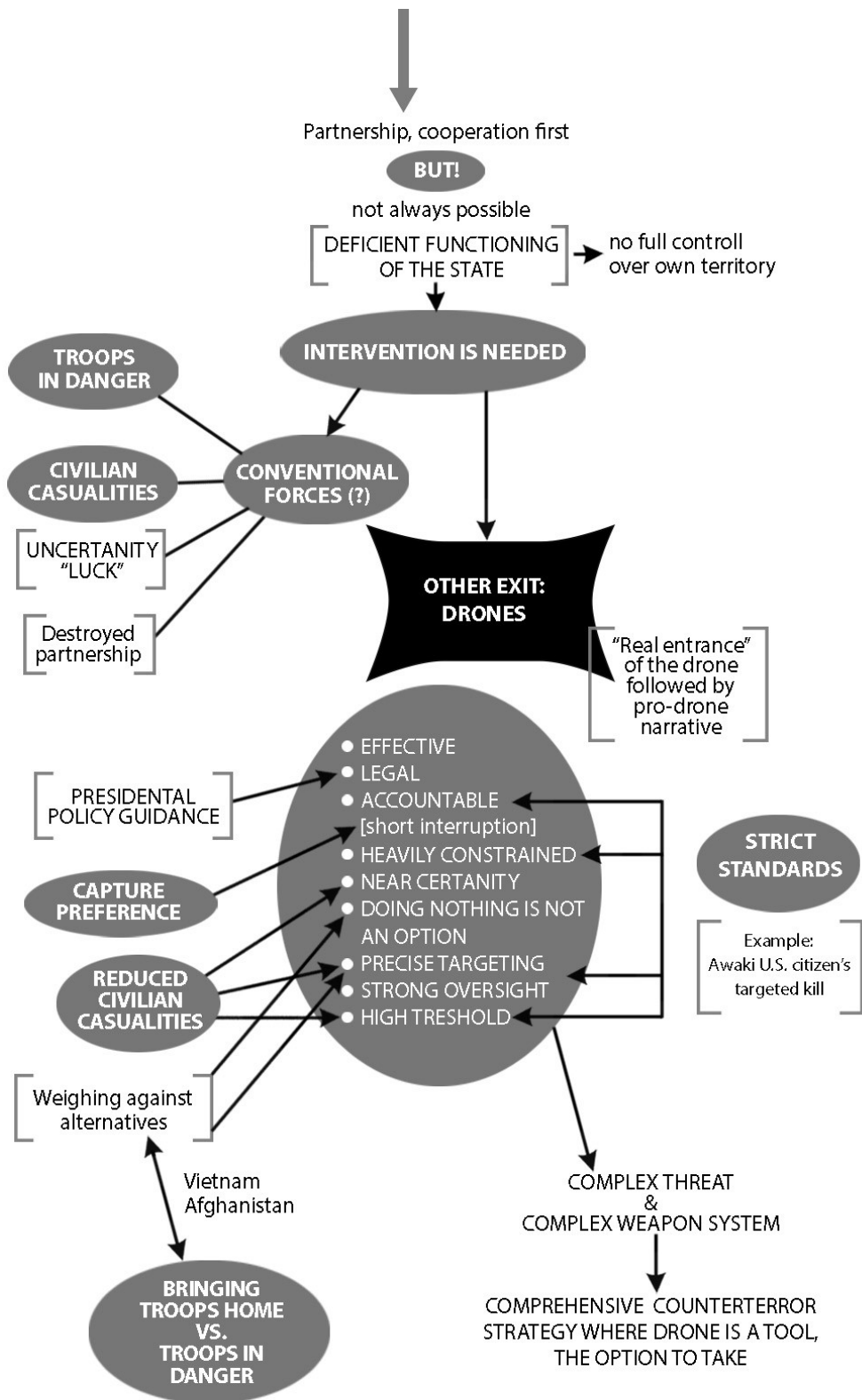


Figure 3.2. Plot of ex-U.S. President Barack Obama's speech (part II.)

### 5.3.2. Plot and Sub-narratives

Barack Obama starts his speech with a historic embedding of America's relationship to war, mostly highlighting that these wars were waged for or conforming to the American founding values such as independence or freedom. He tells a story about the past, where with the end of Cold War and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the U.S. seemed to face a peaceful time, a relieve after decades of conflict. However, September 11, 2001, "*shook U.S. out of this complacency*" (OS p.2 #6). 9/11 pushed the U.S. back to war, and this war has not come to an end yet. The United States is at war, but in a "different" kind of war where the attacked, self-defending hero (the U.S. Administration) has to face with an unusual enemy, that is not a state but terrorists seeking to kill civilians rather than militants. Obama tells a tale about the situation and background of events to which the U.S. had to respond. He creates the sensation, that the U.S. was forced into the conflict, and it is purely defending itself since then. This retrospective account has a quite linear storyline. The U.S. was at Cold War; with the collapse of Berlin Wall peace-time has finally arrived; but 9/11 attacks broke the tranquil time; as a result U.S. was pushed back to war; therefore now U.S. is at war again.

#### INVOLVEMENT IN WAR – "NATION AT WAR"

The choreography of the speech starts with a quite long introductory part, where the situation to which the United States has to react is carefully constructed. This first section is not about describing the 'state-of-affairs', rather it builds up and prepares a whole scene that is ideal for the 'pro-drone' argument to enter. Interestingly, the word "drone" is said first on page 5 (entrance), and Obama goes into a detailed argument from page 13 ('real' entrance). In the following section, I am going to look more closely this first block of the speech.

The introductory part begins with a historic embedding of Americans' relationship to war, accompanied by expressions such as freedom or independence that symbolize certain basic, general, "founding" values of the nation. The term war itself is deeply into the American talk that is nicely constructed in the following lines.

**OS p.1 #5-6** "[...] Americans have served in uniform since 1791 – standing guard in the earliest days of the Republic [...]"

**OS p.1 #12-14** "[...] Americans are deeply ambivalent about war, but having fought for our independence, we know a price must be paid for freedom. From the Civil War to our struggle against fascism, on through the long twilight struggle of the Cold War [...]"

Freedom and independence are strong pillars of the American national identity, it can be easily traced in symbolic documents such as the Constitution (created in 1787 – first 10 amendments or the "Bill of Rights" that guarantees personal freedoms and rights such as the

freedom of expression and religion) or the Declaration of Independence (4th July, 1776), but the national holiday, Independence Day, the Statue of Liberty (right hand- torch the symbol of freedom, left hand tablet – July 4, 1776 is written on that) or the reverse of the Great Seal (1776 with roman numerals) also bear evidence of it. Waging war for these values is generally accepted as a virtue. Thus the aim of this first part of the speech is to construct an ‘appropriate’ scene where the drone-argument can enter, freedom and independence could be understood as “collective symbols”, which are known by all members of the American society (Jäger, Maier, 2009. p.47). As the previous examples show, there is a wide repertoire of images we can associate with freedom and independence in the U.S. context. These repertoires construct certain pictures of reality for the audience (Jäger, Maier, 2009. p.48). Connecting American relationship to war to the core national values establish a basement for further argument in the topic.

Right after this part, peace as a tranquil but short period of time appears in the storyline.

**OS p.2 #3-6** “With the collapse of the Berlin Wall, a new dawn of democracy took hold abroad, and a decade of peace and prosperity arrived here at home. And for a moment, it seemed the 21st century would be a tranquil time”

The emphasis here is on the shortness, because this “tranquil time” was immediately cut by September 11, 2001.

**OS p.2 #6-8** “And then, on September 11, 2001, we were shaken out of complacency. Thousands were taken from us, as clouds of fire and metal and ash descended upon a sun-filled morning”

It was a turning point, not only to America but unquestionably for all the other nations as well. The terror attack took approximately 3000 deaths, most of them were civilians (Templeton, Lumley, 2002). 9/11 still provides a huge legitimizing and legalizing basis for any intervention that aims to stop or roll back terror acts. As an example Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF), that was an immediate response to 9/11 (passed on 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 2001) is the legal framework that authorizes the use of U.S. forces against those who are responsible for the 9/11 terror attacks and their “associated forces”. Later in the analysis I will tie back to this statement. Moreover, this quote also raises attention to the first strike that came from the terrorists, so any U.S. action is a counter-action/ a response to that.

9/11 leaves some interpretative flexibility to the audience. The terror attacks are deeply embedded in the American collective memory, therefore this experience could be easily ‘collectivized’ and utilized as source of legitimacy and as a generic reference. Certainly, every American has his or her own 9/11, for those who have lost relatives and

friends the tragedy means something very different than for those who lived far from New York and were not personally attached. But, the key point is that 9/11 is a national bereavement for all Americans, it is part of their collective imagination. Not only was the United States attacked externally in homeland during peacetime, but it was also assaulted *differently* than before.

**OS p.2 #8-11** “This was a different kind of war. No armies came to our shores, and our military was not the principal target. Instead, a group of terrorists came to kill as many civilians as they could”

As we may observe, the main difference emphasized here is that the target of the attacks was the civilian population. As opposed to past practices, when mostly military personnel was the target and civilian population was the ‘collateral damage’ (and let’s not tie back to Hiroshima and Nagasaki) now the terrorists directly aimed to kill civilians. Civilian or innocent death is something that is encountered *immoral* in itself, but if it is intentional that pushes the issue to an even worse category. Nevertheless, attacking directly civilians means that not only the United States of America is attacked as an entity, but the American nation, the American citizens as well.

9/11 provides a moral basis for the response, which is the war on terror. More precisely, not the United States went to war, but:

**OS p.2 #12** “And so our nation went to war”

Using the word “nation” ties back to what I have already tried to open up: because of the mass civilian casualties of 9/11 (where the American civilians were the prior target), the nation as a collective whole is at war. Reminding the audience to that and to why counterterror actions and policies are needed, how the U.S. got involved in the war on terror is a crucial point in the choreography. If it is not stressed and rehearsed enough, then the necessity of the U.S. war on terror might be contested. If it is contested, then there is no need to talk about the military employment of Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies, so the whole structure of the speech could become fragile.

The historic storytelling about how the U.S. went to war seem quite linear until now, of course the story lines will become more complicated.

### **Storytelling - Choreography:**

Brief history of war (American context, values: independence, freedom) → Short peacetime → Unexpected 9/11 (different : immoral, targeting civilians, targeting a nation) → Going to war on terror (defense, prevention)

Tying back to what I began to unfold when I was writing about the issue of first strike, the following lines argue for the position that the U.S. takes in the situation.

**OS p.3 #1-3** *“Meanwhile, we strengthened our defenses — hardening targets, tightening transportation security, giving law enforcement new tools to prevent terror”*

Defense and prevention - not offense - are the prominent arguments. Page 3, lines # 1-3 were the first testimony, that a self-defensive position of the U.S. is constructed in this speech. Later, on page 14, it is explicitly mentioned:

**OS p.14 #13-16** *“[...]a war waged proportionally, in last resort, and in self-defense. And yet, as our fight enters a new phase, America’s legitimate claim of self-defense cannot be the end of the discussion”*

This is an interesting analytical observation about the entangling threads. What could be read on page 2, already provided some hints about the U.S. position (not the U.S. ‘shoot’ first; it is the victim) that is constructed step-by-step during the building of the scene. On page 3, strengthening defense to prevent terror follows, reinforcing our suspicion that the U.S. is in a ‘defensive state’. On page 14, our expectations are proved to be true: the war is waged “in last resort, and in self-defense”.

**OS p.2 #6-8** *“And then, on September 11, 2001, we were shaken out of complacency. Thousands were taken from us, as clouds of fire and metal and ash descended upon a sun-filled morning”*



**OS p.3 #1-3** *“Meanwhile, we strengthened our defenses — hardening targets, tightening transportation security, giving law enforcement new tools to prevent terror”*



**OS p.14 #13-16** *“[...]a war waged proportionally, in last resort, and in self-defense. And yet, as our fight enters a new phase, America’s legitimate claim of self-defense cannot be the end of the discussion”*

What we have seen so far, was focused on why and how the United States is at war against terror, what is its position within the situation. These arguments all supported the legitimacy of actions in the war and at the same time, they constructed a *vision* about the situation. If I have to recompose the narrative and the vision constructed so far very briefly, I would say: the U.S. as a nation was attacked by terrorists, resulting in a self-defensive response that aims preventing terror, through going to war against those who are responsible for the attack and their affiliates.

This is how Obama constructs the setting of the story, in which the plot “unfolds” (Deuten, Rip, 2000. p.73) If we have a closer look at, the speech actually has two settings. An external

one: place of spatial performance, time and purpose; and an 'internal' one: which is the setting of the story itself. U.S. being at war is the basic internal organizing principle around which all the actions, ingredients and characters are ordered.

Before he turns to talk about his efforts, Obama ties back to the mistakes that the previous Administration conducted, causing comprise with basic values such as using torture in interrogation. But when he took office, these came to an end. All actions taken in response to the offense is defensive, however these defensive actions are purposeful and determinate.

Being defensive and strongly counteractive is present in the picture parallel.

*"We relentlessly targeted al Qaeda's leadership."*

(OS p.3 #11)

In the story, this "relentless" targeting resulted in the end of war in Iraq and that troops could be brought home from that hostile area. Due to these actions, Osama bin Laden and core al-Qa'ida leaders are dead, U.S. homeland became more secure and thanks to the Administration's efforts no larger action took place on U.S. territory. Interestingly, the elimination of bin Laden is in a passive tense: "Obama bin Laden is dead". At this point we do not know from the text, by whom was he killed. Later on, the audience is reminded that this action was carried out by 'them' ("our operation") so based on the Administration's order by U.S. Special Forces. Bin Laden is not relevant anymore. But (!), and there is the "but" warning the audience that the threat has not disappear, it is still there even if it shifted. This "but" legitimizes all the counterterrorism actions that have taken place since the elimination of Osama bin Laden. Without an introduction of a new enemy or new threat, any counterterror or lethal force actions would seem to be unnecessary. Enemy #1 – al-Q'aida is weakened, close to defeat thanks to the targeted actions against al-Qa'ida leadership, however enemy #2 is still present, and threatens the American nation. What has to be done is to understand this new threat, and also how to confront with that.

*" [...] this is the moment to ask ourselves hard questions – about the nature of today's threats (Q1) and how we should confront them (Q2). And these questions matter to every American."*

(OS p.4 #11-13)

After this claim, he encounters the losses of troops America had to suffer in this long war. The loss of American troops and a sub-narrative for the necessity of bringing them home is quite prominent in his speech. Not ending a war but bringing troops home at the same time 'cries' for a solution.

## SUB-NARRATIVE FOR THE NECESSITY OF BRINGING TROOPS HOME

### PRE-DRONE PART

“*Bringing troops home*” argument is closely tied to the war on terror, to the Obama presidency and later to the pro-drone argument. Bringing soldiers back to homeland from overseas ground force operations is one of the regularly repeated central points, therefore tracing how this is done within the speech even before the drone enters the scene is significant.

**BEFORE** the drone enters the scene

**OS p.3 #10-13** “*So after I took office, we stepped up the war against al Qaeda but we also sought to change its course. We relentlessly targeted al Qaeda’s leadership. We ended the war in Iraq, and brought nearly 150,000 troops home*”

**OS p.4 #3-5** “*Fewer of our troops are in harm’s way, and over the next 19 months they will continue to come home*”

*Troops in danger:*

**OS p.4 #16-p.5 #3** *Our servicemembers and their families have sacrificed far more on our behalf. Nearly 7,000 Americans have made the ultimate sacrifice. Many more have left a part of themselves on the battlefield, or brought the shadows of battle back home.*

The quotes above from page 3, 4 and 5 are built on top of each other in terms of constructing a vision of why bringing troops home is a priority. In the first quote, bringing soldiers home is present only quantitatively, it recalls what happened so far. Here, the number has the greatest role: by saying that they have brought 150, 000 troops home, the President represents the scale of how many servicemen are in operations abroad (these were the troops serving only in the Iraqi war). The next quote from page four goes a bit further. “*Fewer troops are in harm’s ways*” meaning clearly that soldiers are in danger. It is quite widely known, that military personnel are always in danger to some extent when they are in operation, or in other words, it is quite natural in this profession. If the President clearly emphasizes their danger/harm, that probably has another purpose as well, not just raising attention to the risk they have to face. Already the second quote starts to create a vision, in which sending troops abroad is unwanted, or should be avoided if possible. The third quote from p.4-p.5 goes even deeper, by connecting soldiers’ peril to shared values of home and families. The strategy of targeting a commonly shared value such as family (everyone has or had a family or relatives, so everyone can relate him/herself) and representing the harm of this value in this case largely reinforces a future imagination, where soldier lives should not be risked or lost.



And this is the part, where he first introduces drones, and also briefly mentions that how they use it, what decisions they make will determine the future, “the world they leave to their children”(OS p.5 #2-6).

### FIRST ENTRANCE OF THE DRONE

The drone first enters the scene right after the family argument:

**OS p.5 #2-6** *“Many more have left a part of themselves on the battlefield, or brought the shadows of battle back home. From our use of **drones** to the detention of terrorist suspects, the decisions that we are making now will define the type of nation – and world – that we leave to our children”*

This first entrance of the drone is connected to future – “that we leave to our children” – which again indicates the making of an imaginary, thus imaginaries are always trying to a vision of future. However in this part, the drone argument is not elaborated, going more into detail happens only later. Unquestionably, this is the first time in the speech that the President refers to drone technologies, but the ‘real’ entrance is happening on page 13.

### SUB-NARRATIVE FOR THE NECESSITY OF BRINGING TROOPS HOME

#### POST DRONE PART

At this point it may seem that I ‘run a bit forward’ in the plot, partly it is true, however logically I feel it important to represent how “bringing troops home” sub-narrative is continuously part of the structure, even after the drone has entered the scene. It reappears two more times:

**AFTER** the drone entered the scene

**OS p.10 #3-4** *“In Afghanistan, we will complete our transition to Afghan responsibility for that country’s security. Our troops will come home”*

*Troops in danger:*

**OS p.19 #1-2** *“Our efforts must be measured against the history of putting American troops in distant lands among hostile populations”.*

The quote from page 19 (#1-2) is directly referring to Vietnam and Afghanistan, that among the great civilian casualties also resulted in huge loss of troops on the American side.

**OS p. 19 #2-6** *“In Vietnam, hundreds of thousands of civilians died in a war where the boundaries of battle were blurred. In Iraq and Afghanistan, despite the extraordinary courage and discipline of our troops, thousands of civilians have been killed”.*

In the Vietnam War, approximately 58,000 American soldiers were killed in action and nearly 154,000 were wounded (National Archives, 2008). Based on the previous arguments, which were stressing that the troops will come home, recurrence of something Vietnam-like is clearly unwanted.

Troops' presence in overseas operations does not only mean danger for them, but for local civilian population as well. "*Despite of the extraordinary courage and discipline of our troops, thousands of civilians have been killed*" – this is another reason why our troops should come home, to reduce the risk of both civilian and military death. U.S. soldiers' presence in intervention is represented as something that is undesirable on both sides: something that is clearly negative. This argument nicely prepares/constructs the context in which unmanned, or remote warfare seems to be more acceptable, than the traditional one. Or in other words, Obama implicitly confronts the audience with the question: People or technology? The war against al-Qa'ida and affiliates goes on, that is for sure, however by different means where the presence of troops on the battlefield shall not be the option to take. And which American would opt for ground troop intervention after as tragic collective experience as Vietnam, when a technology that could replace servicemen on the field is available.

In order to act wisely, he stresses again, understanding the threat is crucial. After constructing the scene (wartime, new threat, American losses, drones in hand), we have arrived to the section where Obama aims to construct Enemy #2, the new threat.

How this newborn opponent is built up in detail will be discussed in the following sub-narrative box, here I would like to briefly discuss the chain of logic to which these sub-narratives are connected. Enemy #2, who was not clearly defined so far is now at stage, it is clearly stated that these groups are emerging al-Qa'ida affiliates. Enemy #2 is however divided. There are the homegrown extremists and the groups functioning abroad. As an example for the "outside threat" he brings up APAQ (al-Qa'ida Affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula), which is active in planning attack against the United States. Obama highlights (as it follows from the terrorist groups' name as well) that these affiliate groups operate in more than one country and in most of the cases they act in place. Even though they act locally, they attack Western interests such as diplomatic facilities. This hint has a hidden message. They operate in more countries against our interests, we should act in more countries to defend our interests. They act in a localized manner, we should also act like that, striking them right where they are. Obama also raises attention to the possible homeland threat of U.S. citizens and residents as well. Later on, he discusses the case of Anwar al Awlaki U.S. citizen who was killed in a targeted strike. Here Obama just 'sketches up', that an attack from fellow citizens may also happen.

With an 'upbeat' Obama says, "*this is the future of terrorism*" (OS p.8 #7). What he wants to constitute after this claim, is a probable future scenario based on past experience.

*“This is the future of terrorism. We have to take these threats seriously, and do all that we can to confront them. But as we shape our response, we have to recognize that the scale of this threat closely resembles the types of attacks we faced before 9/11.”*

(OS p.8 #7-10)

The ties back to the pre-9/11 period, when no one expected that al- Qa’ida is capable of carrying out as large scaled action as 9/11 was. The “resemblance” warns the audience, that if it once happened it may happen again. Another 9/11 is unacceptable, it must be avoided by any means. He brings examples of attacks from the pre-9/11 period that could have been served as warning signs of a greater action, but U.S. did not respond on time. Obama creates a vision of a naive U.S. in the pre-9/11 period, which did not take threats seriously enough, quasi underestimated them. The message is sent: this will not happen again. Preemptive steps should be taken proportionally, the aim is to avoid the threats rise to the level of 9/11.

The next thing the President highlights in his speech is that even though enemy is fueled by Islamic extremism, the United States is not at war with Islam. This extremist ideology is “based on a lie” (OS p.9 #8), it is rejected by the majority of Muslims, moreover in most of the cases Muslims are the victims of terror attacks. With this, Obama clarifies that the “war on terror” has nothing to do with Islam or Muslims. It is purely about terrorists, who seek to do harm for the United States.

### **CONSTRUCTING THE THREAT**

In order to be able to build a stable argument for drones, it is quite obvious that first the threat should be discussed in more detail. The introduction of this topic within the speech begins with two questions (p.4 #11-13) when the President claims that all Americans have to ask two questions from themselves: one about the nature of the current threats (Q1) and another about how to confront them (Q2). Answering question one, begins a few lines later on page six. Constructing the nature of threat is an important step in building an imaginary, because the ‘new’ technology – drones – have to fit to these threats. In a pro-drone argument, we expect, that these technologies (based on the nature of threat) will be represented as the best possible tools to confront with it. As it is going to become obvious while reading this sub-narrative box, Obama further complexifies the threat that was represented as ‘simply’ continuous or imminent previously. The President starts showing the multiplicity of threat by clearly stating that it is diffuse, which term in itself indicates complexity.

## I.) DIFFUSE

The first answer to Q1 is that today's threat is more diffuse because of the emergence of various al Qaeda affiliates. These affiliates are not defined clearly rather they are named: APAQ. The naming makes it more concrete than it is in reality, thus the acronym of APAQ covers more terrorist groups. APAQ – the enemy - quite nicely fits to the discourse of America being at war with al Qaeda and its affiliates (Authorization to Use Military Force).

**OS p.6 #8-11** *“Instead, what we’ve seen is the emergence of various al Qaeda affiliates. From Yemen to Iraq, from Somalia to North Africa, the threat today is more diffuse, with Al Qaeda’s affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula – AQAP – the most active in plotting against our homeland”.*

Diffuse here in this context, not only means that the network of terrorist organizations is diffuse, but that they show up in various countries, highlighting: Yemen, Iraq, Somalia, and North Africa (North Africa as a notion includes several countries).

## II.) ON NEW TERRITORIES

Closely related to the diffuse nature of threats, the territorial spectrum of the threat is represented as extended to Libya and Syria as well.

**OS p.6 #15-16** *“Unrest in the Arab world has also allowed extremists to gain a foothold in countries like Libya and Syria”*

Now the ‘target countries’ are identifiable: Yemen, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria and other countries in North Africa. One may ask: What about Pakistan? The number of drone attacks in Pakistan greatly dropped after 2010 (Bergen, Rowland, 2013, p.15; Shane, 2013). The speech is from 2013, when the prior target region of drone strikes has already shifted. The explicit claim of countries, where the new threat might be located is a crucial point in building up a vision (where is it acceptable to conduct drone strikes). Later, this demarcation of territory (where the U.S. claims authority to fight against al Qaeda and associate forces) has a role in building up the legality argument. The U.S. drone program is often criticized and questioned: Why does the U.S. carry out drone strikes in countries with whom it is not at war? The explanation is in the quote above: extremists gained foothold in the enlisted countries, therefore the U.S. has the right to order preemptive counterterror strikes there.

## II.) LOCALIZED THREAT

Constructing the threat as a localized one happens after the demarcation of the region where terrorist suspect groups strengthened.

**OS p.7 #1-4** *“In some cases, we continue to confront state-sponsored networks like Hezbollah that engage in acts of terror to achieve political goals. Other of these groups are simply collections of local militias or extremists interested in seizing territory”.*

Claiming that a terrorist group is state-sponsored and that its aim is to achieve political goals, already indicates that these operate locally because their interests are tied to the region. The example of Hezbollah supports this argument, because this organization mostly operates locally. Local militias, extremists who are interested in seizing territory similarly functions in this argument. Their first and foremost aim is to gain territory (and supposedly not from the U.S.) it seems to be a logical contexture that they will operate on the spot.

On page 7 in line 7, the President directly says that today the threat is more localized than before.

**OS p.7 #5-8** *[...]“these groups may pose a transnational threat, most are focused on operating in the countries and regions where they are based. And that means we’ll face more localized threats like what we saw”[...]*

In this quote, it is openly claimed, that the threatening groups operate in those regions where they are based. If the place of the threat is known, then it is easier to confront with it. If the threat is constructed as localized, and if there are also hints about where it is localized, then an argument for ‘curing’ the problem in place may seem valid. Solving the problem in place, but connected to “bringing troops home” argument, not with direct ground troop intervention. Constructing a vision about bringing U.S. soldiers home and an image about the localized nature of the threat together creates a context in which the use of remotely piloted aircraft seems to be needed.

## IV. THREAT FROM RADICALIZED INDIVIDUALS

The threat is identified as an ideological one, also present within the borders of the United States. When it was about other countries, the threat was always represented as a collective one (by groups), but when it is about homeland, the threat seems to be changing, and becomes individual. These persons are described as alienated and deranged, often U.S. citizens.

**OS p.7-8 #13-2** *“And finally, we face a real threat from radicalized individuals here in the United States. Whether it’s a shooter at a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin, a plane flying into a building in Texas, or the extremists who killed 168 people at the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, America has confronted many forms of violent extremism in our history. Deranged or alienated individuals – often U.S. citizens or legal residents – can do enormous damage”[...]*

These persons get radicalized constantly, which ties back to the ‘continuous’ nature of the threat. As a result, in homeland and abroad there is no clear villain, they are continually changing, fluidity characterizes their behavior. An enemy that is fuelled by a radical ideology (identified as jihad) continuously reproduces, which process should be stopped. In order to stop the ‘fluid’ enemy, RPA technologies - enabling more adaptation - seem to be the key.

## V. JIHAD

Connecting to the argument of radicalized threat, the speech entangles jihad, violence and extremism. At this point self-reflexivity is needed, because this is something really controversial in any political speech. Using an argument like this raises serious moral and ethical question. Connecting in- or explicitly any religion to violence, especially in a political speech where later a pro-drone argument is built is greatly contestable. It is especially hard to approach this particular ‘code’ objectively, however it cannot be left out or ignored, because it plays role in building a vision about the threat.

**OS p. 8 #3-4** *[...]“can do enormous damage, particularly when inspired by larger notions of violent jihad. And that pull towards extremism appears to have led to the shooting at Fort Hood and the bombing of the Boston Marathon”.*

This connection is not accidental. Most of the targets and victims of drone strikes are Muslims. Based on these lines, extremism and radicalism seems to be constructed primary as an Islamic threat. This suspicion is even strengthened on page 9.

**OS p.9 #4-7** *“Most, though not all, of the terrorism we faced is fueled by a common ideology – a belief by some extremists that Islam is in conflict with the United States and the West, and that violence against Western targets, including civilians, is justified in pursuit of a larger cause”.*

Despite of the fact that the President clarifies in the following line that the U.S. is not at war with Islam, an effort to build a generalizing vision about the threat as an Islamic one, cannot be fully compensated by the following lines:

**OS p.9 #7-10** *“Of course, this ideology is based on a lie, for the United States is not at war with Islam. And this ideology is rejected by the vast majority of Muslims, who are the most frequent victims of terrorist attacks.”*

The message is sent, the previous statements are very open for misinterpretation.

#### IV. THREATS DON'T ARISE IN A VACUUM

The last answer to Q1 is that these 'new' threats do not arise in a vacuum (in an interregnum period, or in places where the government does not function at all). This is a crucial point. Based on the previous experience, drone strikes were conducted on terrains where there was some kind of functioning government (and here I do not want to open a debate about how they functioned, because that would lead too far).

**p.9 #3-4** *“Moreover, we have to recognize that these threats don't arise in a vacuum”.*

This statement also facilitates the explanation of the question: based on what does the U.S. intervene (with eg. drones) in quasi sovereign countries? The threat might not arise in a vacuum but it does not mean that the threat is less dangerous and intervention is not needed.

I take a small bypass here. In the last section of his speech, Obama starts to discuss the components of the comprehensive counterterrorism strategy, from which this Master Thesis is interested about the use of military drone technologies. Remotely piloted aircrafts are discussed in the first part of the counterterror strategy, later on the President talks about other elements and Guantanamo Bay that fall out of the scope of my work. Here, I decided to analyze the speech till it is logically tied to any kind of argumentation of drones.

Now, that the audience was informed about the nature of threat, the President moves on, and provides an explanation of the 'cure' of problem. He identifies the defeat of al-Qa'ida and associated forces in Afghanistan as a first step to take, which seems quite close to come. If it happens, U.S. troops should be brought home from that hostile area. Against threats beyond Afghanistan, which are sparse and are posing danger on the U.S., Obama does not want to conduct a *“boundless global war on terror”* (OS p.10 #9-10). Rather, he wants to take series of targeted efforts to destroy the networks of terrorists threatening America.

*“Beyond Afghanistan, we must define our effort not as a boundless “global war on terror,” but rather as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America.”*

(OS p.10 #9-12)

Before he introduces the use of lethal force as an option, he discusses capture and partnership with other countries as preference. Partnership works best in gathering and sharing information and in the arrest and prosecution of terrorists. However, even if this is

the preference, there are cases when it is not feasible. Discussing the option of capture and prosecution is a logical step before introducing the 'lethal solution'. The President cannot claim, that there are no other means only the targeted kill of the enemy. Least dreadful options should come first and be represented as preferable options. It is easier to convince the audience of the use of drone technologies, when it is claimed that they are used only in last resort, when all the other attempts to stop the individual failed or are simply impossibly risky.

Obama explains that the enemy tend to hide in remote tribal regions, where the country to whom that territory belongs is unable or unwilling to act against them. He also says that it is not possible for America to deploy Special Forces to capture every terrorist. He rephrases it: what they did in case of Osama bin Laden cannot be the norm, it was extremely dangerous. Obama goes further:

*“The fact that we did not find ourselves confronted with civilian casualties, or embroiled in an extended firefight, was a testament to the meticulous planning and professionalism of our Special Forces, but it also depended on some luck.”*

(OS p.12 #15-17)

A larger confrontation with civilian population was dependent on professional planning but on luck as well. And depending on luck when it is about human lives, is something clearly unwanted. If the risk is not enough reason, relationships and partnerships with other countries could be also easily destroyed that way. To avoid all that, drones are needed.

### **‘REAL’ ENTRANCE OF THE DRONE**

As I have already mentioned, the ‘real’ entrance of the drone happens on page 13. I decided to call it like this, because this second entering of the drone to the scene sets in motion the “pro-drone” argument.

**p.13 #7-9** “So it is in this context that the United States has taken lethal, targeted action against al Qaeda and its associated forces, including with **remotely piloted aircraft** commonly referred to as **drones**”.

In the next 10 pages, argument for the employment of drone technologies in overseas operations is performed. The drone ‘landed’ on a structurally well built plot: the historical context of the U.S. and war/terror was ‘refreshed’ in the introductory part; the position of the States was established (defensive-preventive); the value of U.S. soldiers’



life was also highlighted during the “bringing troops home” argument (also Vietnam and Afghanistan memories are rehearsed later in the text, which are crucial building blocks of the current American relationship to war); the nature of today’s threat is also built up. The basis for ‘landing’ is firmly constructed.

Obama points out that there are serious questions regarding remotely piloted technologies that should be discussed. Through addressing these ‘key points’ the President constructs a certain image of drone technologies, a vision aiming to make them not only accepted but clearly wanted. To achieve this, certain sub-narratives are utilized and adjusted to the plot.

### KEY POINTS OF THE PRO-DRONE NARRATIVE

In this section, my aim is to represent what I have synthesized from the pro-drone narrative performed in the speech. The following points provide the backbone of the narrative, the building blocks, that I was opening up. These ‘bricks’ not only build up a story but at the same time they construct a certain vision about remotely piloted technologies in order to achieve acceptance within the society. Most elements of these modules have been discussed by the previous speeches and are rehearsed here (efficacy or legality arguments) in order to stabilize the sociotechnical imaginary of military drones. However some of them occupied least prominent place in those prior discussions, which are more elaborated here.

#### I. EFFECTIVE

Effectiveness in itself is a very strong argument for the use of any technology. Especially if we tie it back to the nature of threat, that is diffuse and complicated, effectiveness of counter-actions cannot be neglected.

**OS p.13-14 #15-2** *“To begin with, our actions are effective. Don’t take my word for it. In the intelligence gathered at bin Laden’s compound, we found that he wrote, “We could lose the reserves to enemy’s air strikes. We cannot fight air strikes with explosives.”*

Using the words of the enemies is an interesting rhetoric strategy. It even more reinforces the argument of effectiveness, because if an action is confessed to be effective by the enemy, than the logical conclusion is that it must be. Using this strategy makes the statement of effectiveness more valid and robust, providing a strong pillar for pro-drone argument.

## II. LEGAL

Legality argument is probably even more important (especially in the U.S. context, where democracy is a strong pillar of the national identity) than the effectiveness. If the use of a technology, or a military operation is proved to be illegal, or its legality cannot be defended strongly, than all attempts to construct a positive imaginary of them collapses. Drone strikes must fit in both domestic and international law.

**OS p.14 #8-14** *“Moreover, America’s actions are legal. We were attacked on 9/11. Within a week, Congress overwhelmingly authorized the use of force. Under domestic law, and international law, the United States is at war with al Qaeda, the Taliban, and their associated forces. We are at war with an organization that right now would kill as many Americans as they could if we did not stop them first. So this is a just war — a war waged proportionally, in last resort, and in self-defense.”*

This quote ties back to what I have discussed so far in the first block of this paper: to 9/11 and the Authorization of Military Use of Force (AUMF). This act provides the legal basis for the actions taken by the U.S. against terrorism. However, it is still highly contestable who are the “associated forces” and who decides that, but I will not go so much in detail now. To add, I want to emphasize again, that this statement does not include territorial constrains. War can be waged anywhere. What is important in this quote is that the Congress authorized the AUMF, so this act was approved democratically. According to the argument, drone-war fits the domestic law. Proportionality and self-defense are two basic principles of de jure belli (law of war) in international law. More precisely, self-defense is the only legitimate way of waging war (Charter of the UN). So at this point we see that drones are constructed as effective and legal weapons (both domestically and internationally) of counterterror strategies in overseas operations.

## III. ACCOUNTABLE

The previous argument aimed to prove that the use of drones was a democratic and legal decision. Legality can be preserved through accountability.

**OS p.15 #3-7** *“And that’s why, over the last four years, my administration has worked vigorously to establish a framework that governs our use of force against terrorists -- insisting upon clear guidelines, oversight and accountability that is now codified in Presidential Policy Guidance that I signed yesterday.”*

Accountability is sealed by guidelines and frameworks, which is codified by the Presidential Policy Guidance (PPG). AUMF legalized the use of such force and PPG regulates how to do that. Constructing the use of drones as accountable greatly supports the previous argument on legality, because if a military operation is not accountable, then how could that be legal?

#### IV. HEAVILY CONSTRAINED

Constructing drone operations as heavily constrained is strongly entangled with the previous two building blocks.

**OS p.15-16 #16-4** *“And even then, the use of drones is heavily constrained. America does not take strikes when we have the ability to capture individual terrorists; our preference is always to detain, interrogate, and prosecute. America cannot take strikes wherever we choose; our actions are bound by consultations with partners, and respect for state sovereignty.”*

Points number III (accountably) and IV (heavily constrained) could be also understood as sub-segments of number II (legality), but I decided to dedicate a bit more space to both. Claiming that any drone strike is well discussed and deliberated before it is conducted, ensures that they are not arbitrarily done. The actions of the United States are constructed as carefully planned and constrained, which characteristics result in high levels of accountability. It is not accidental, that the accountability and heavily-constrained threads followed the legality argument. Together, they provide a firm framework in which drones operate. It also opposes the general critique of drone strikes that they are conducted in a self-interested way. A few paragraphs later, point ‘strong oversight’ also backs up this argument.

#### III. NEAR-CERTAINTY

Near certainty is probably the most easily contestable brick of the whole pro-drone narrative.

**OS p.16 #8-10** *“And before any strike is taken, there must be near-certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured — the highest standard we can set”.*

Drone strikes are highly criticized because of the loss of civilian lives, (despite of targeting procedures) therefore in the speech it would not be credible to say simply ‘certainty’ or ‘exact targeting’ for example. However an argument for the targeting processes is needed. Precision also serves this purpose, but it is more focused on the technical capabilities of RPAs. Near-certainty clearly addresses the targeting itself, so the procedure before any missile is shot. A strike is approved only if there is a near-certainty. This point opens up several questions again: What is a near-certainty? What is near enough? Who decides that? Based on what? But, the reason of my research is not to formulate moral and ethical critique of the speech rather to enlighten and dig out the building blocks of the imaginary of drones, therefore I will not investigate these questions in detail. If I had to identify I would say this is the weak-point of the whole pro-drone argument.

## VI. DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION

“*Doing nothing is not an option*” (OS p.17 #6-13) is closely tied to the already existing ‘responsibility to protect’ (Groves, 2008) imaginary. Or I may say, point number VI. could be treated as a reformulation of ‘responsibility to protect’.

**OS p.17 #6-13** *“To do nothing in the face of terrorist networks would invite far more civilian casualties [...] Remember that the terrorists we are after target civilians, and the death toll from their acts of terrorism against Muslims dwarfs any estimate of civilian casualties from drone strikes. So doing nothing is not an option.”*

In the quote above it is clearly stated that doing nothing would result in more civilian deaths, therefore non-involvement would evoke more ethical and moral concerns. The U.S. cannot simply stay out and let people die of terrorist acts. More harshly this argument hints that the U.S is obliged to do something. So besides 9/11 and AUMF, responsibility to protect also legitimizes and legalizes the use of drones.

## VII. PRECISE

As already mentioned, precision refers to the capability of drones to discriminately eliminate terrorist suspect persons. Constructing drones as precise, discriminate devices – in the light of civilian casualties – is one of the strongest pillar of the pro-drone argument. This characteristic of RPAs is something new compared to conventional airpower.

**OS p.17-18 #17-2** *“Conventional airpower or missiles are far less precise than drones, and are likely to cause more civilian casualties and more local outrage.”*

With drones, the target can be followed, monitored before the strike, which is not possible with conventional airforce.

**OS p.18 #7-9** *“So it is false to assert that putting boots on the ground is less likely to result in civilian deaths or less likely to create enemies in the Muslim world.”*

Drones are not only more accurate than traditional airpower but also more precise than ground troops. The imaginary that ground troop intervention causes less civilian death than drones (probably it seems to be more logical because of the distance), is deconstructed in these lines.

**OS p.18 #13-16** *„[...] by narrowly targeting our action against those who want to kill us and not the people they hide among, we are choosing the course of action least likely to result in the loss of innocent life.”*

Narrow targeting, selective strikes also support the argument that drones cause less innocent deaths.

## VIII. STRONG OVERSIGHT

Coming up with the argument of strong oversight is a loop back to the legality-accountability points. After discussing the more contestable arguments (near-certainty, precision) tying back to the firm and stable points (II. and III.) seem to be a logical rhetoric strategy to take.

**OS p.20 #3-8** *“And for this reason, I’ve insisted on strong oversight of all lethal action. [...] Let me repeat that: Not only did Congress authorize the use of force, it is briefed on every strike that America takes. Every strike”.*

The Congress as a symbol of democracy and legality comes up again, justifying the vision that drone operations are completely transparent and legal.

## XI. HIGH THRESHOLD

Saying that there is a high threshold set in case of lethal actions hints that they are done in last resort. It also ties back to the heavily constrained nature of strikes.

**OS p.22 #9-8** *“But the high threshold that we’ve set for taking lethal action applies to all potential terrorist targets, regardless of whether or not they are American citizens. This threshold respects the inherent dignity of every human life”.*

The statement that the threshold respects the dignity of human life involves an ethical argument in the narrative. Respect of dignity is generally a basic value of any society, any individual. Here, drone operations are envisioned as acts that respect these basic values, so it is much easier for the members of the audience to identify him/herself with it.

To sum it up, If I had to recompose the narrative, drones are constructed in this speech as effective, legal, accountable, precise and ‘fair’ (high threshold- respect of human dignity; heavily constrained- respect of state sovereignty) technologies to confront today’s multiple and complex threat of terrorism. If we compare how drones are and how the threat is described, we may observe that they seem to be fitting. By drones, localized threats and radicalized individuals could be “detained” (as it was referred in the text) the loss of U.S. troops and mass civilian lives could be avoided legally and accountably. Or at least this is envisioned.

Obama starts his argument for drones with their efficacy and legality, which points are addressed very briefly as it could be seen in the sub-narrative box as well, thus there have been two entire speeches on these topics. Interesting to observe here that Obama highlights that efficacy and legality is not necessarily identical to wisdom or morality every time. Constrains are needed. Since this speech was delivered right the day after the Presidential Policy Guidance was signed, it is not surprising that the narrative is more focused on

constrains, than on legality and efficacy. The importance of passing the guidance is future related. Drone war goes on, it will continue. Obama clearly states that in Afghanistan there is still a need for ground troop support of drones, and also points out that beyond Afghanistan they will continue to target al-Qa'ida and associated forces. The President ensures operations will be conducted in a heavily constrained manner. He repeats that their preference is capture, and also clarifies that the U.S. does not take actions when-and wherever it wants, thus it respects state-sovereignty. He also stresses that lethal force is used in case of an imminent threat against a continuous danger, and with maximum care of civilian lives.

*“And before any strike is taken, there must be near-certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured — the highest standard we can set.”*

(OS p.16 #9-10)

#### **SUB-NARRATIVE OF REDUCING CIVILIAN CASUALTIES**

This argument shows up at several points of the speech, therefore I did not want to suppress it into a linear structure (it appears both before and after the entrance of the drone, the issue of civilian casualties comes up regularly). However it seemed to be best fitting to discuss here in the plot.

**OS p.12 #4-9** [...]”*America to simply deploy a team of Special Forces to capture every terrorist. Even when such an approach may be possible, there are places where it would pose profound risks to our troops and local civilians — where a terrorist compound cannot be breached without triggering a firefight with surrounding tribal communities, for example, that pose no threat to us”[...]*

This previous quote is from the pre-entrance part of the speech, and it emphasizes that in several cases the approach to “capture every terrorist” is just simply not feasible, or it would pose too much risk to troops and to civilians as well. This conventional way of war-fight – deploying U.S. Special Forces – may result in firefights that leads to grand losses on both sides. One may assume that the civilian deaths will be higher than the military ones, because they are not as well trained and do not own professional weapons.

**OS p.12-13 #14-1** *“The fact that we did not find ourselves confronted with civilian casualties, or embroiled in an extended firefight, was a testament to the meticulous planning and professionalism of our Special Forces, but it also depended on some luck.”*

Alternative is provided: narrow targeting of drones, discriminate, selective kills. This quote is also boosted with a moral argument, if there is a possibility to select ‘harmful’ people from the innocent ones, this is an obligation. U.S. wants to protect the innocents by employing the targeted kills of remotely piloted aircraft technologies.

This targeting is different from the firefights of a conventional battle, where the soldier fights for his/her life as well.

To very briefly sum it up, what we see here is a sub-narrative of the story aiming to back up the attempted building of an imaginary. The storyline was here the following: civilian casualties are belonging to the nature of war → conventional warfare also causes innocent deaths → doing nothing is not an option → conventional warfare result in more civilian death than unconventional (false to think the opposite) → alternative: targeting (by drones)

The probability of getting confronted with the civilian population is a very high risk in ground troop operation. Even though the quote refers to the professional planning, luck is also included. Luck in its meaning holds uncertainty. One thing is for sure: no one wants civilian or military lives to depend on something as accidental and incalculable as luck. This is clearly unwanted. As we may remember, a couple of lines after this striking claim, the drone followed by the pro-drone argument entered the plot.

Here, I would like to provide some other examples where innocent death as a basis for argument appeared. Following the thread of civilian casualties nicely shows how it supports the pro-drone argument step-by-step. Thus, the scope of the Master Thesis is limited, I did not include all of them.

**OS p.16 #13-16** *“There’s a wide gap between U.S. assessments of such casualties and nongovernmental reports. Nevertheless, it is a hard fact that U.S. strikes have resulted in civilian casualties, a risk that exists in every war”.*

It is uncontested that drone strikes cause civilian deaths. No one wants to argue for the opposite, however in this quote we may observe a ‘naturalizing’ attempt, that the risk of civilian victims exist in every war (both conventional and unconventional). It cannot be fully avoided.

**OS p.17 #1-4** *“For me, and those in my chain of command, those deaths will haunt us as long as we live, just as we are haunted by the civilian casualties that have occurred throughout conventional fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq”.*

Here, the emphasis is added on the casualties caused by conventional warfare. The importance of it will be elaborated a few lines later.

**OS p.17 #6-7** *“To do nothing in the face of terrorist networks would invite far more civilian casualties [...]”*

In this line, it is argued that non-intervention would probably result in more innocent deaths. Some intervention is needed. That’s a must.

**OS p.18 #7-10** *“So it is false to assert that putting boots on the ground is less likely to result in civilian deaths or less likely to create enemies in the Muslim world. The results would be more U.S. deaths, more Black Hawks down, more confrontations with local populations [...]”*

It is a wrong imagination, that conventional warfare causes less civilian loss. Completely wrong. Ergo, unconventional warfare is that ensures lower rates of civilian deaths. This quote’s aim is to deconstruct the existing imaginary about ground troop intervention by clearly stating that it is false. It suggests that alternatives are needed.

**OS p.18 #14-16** *“But by narrowly targeting our action against those who want to kill us and not the people they hide among, we are choosing the course of action least likely to result in the loss of innocent life”.*

On the other hand, he also warns that civilian death is an unfortunate risk that exist in all war, the situation is not specific to drone-strikes, unconventional military intervention also causes innocent death. But as a Commander-in-Chief he has to make serious decisions. He encounters the alternative options. He has to take into consideration, what Brennan called “costs of INaction” (BS p.25 #10-12) in his speech. If an action is not taken, it is possible that more innocent people will die in the end of the day, so as Obama phrases there are situations when *“doing nothing is not an option”* (OS p.17 #12-13). Doing nothing could be one alternative, only if the costs of INaction are not unacceptably high. Another alternative is an intervention with conventional ground troop or airpower. The problem with this option is that it puts troops into high risk, moreover conventional missiles are least precise than drone technologies, so the inevitably may cause more collateral death. It could easily result in more confrontation with the locals and an escalated new war. The conclusion of encountering the alternatives is that targeted actions are the least wrong steps to take. What Obama does to further reinforce this belief is that he ties back again to history and uses already existing fears in the society as tools to make RPA technologies more wanted. As I have already pointed out while discussing the “bringing troops home” sub-narrative, Vietnam and later on Afghanistan syndrome are deeply embedded in the American collective memory as clearly unwanted events, meaning enormous loss of servicemen in far hostile areas. Vietnam War is something, that none of the Americans want to replay again. Not only resulted it in huge losses of American troops, but the returning soldiers suffered from serious mental and physical diseases. To summarize, these are the available other options, the Administration can take if it decides against the use of RPA technologies. What the Administration could do without drones is on the one side nothing (so inaction) possibly resulting in larger civilian casualties, or intervention with conventional air- or ground power, which is extremely risky for both troops and civilians. Through encountering these other possibilities and their consequences, remotely piloted technology seem to be the solution for several issues of war.



After reminding of the national tragedies Vietnam and Afghanistan, Obama confesses that sometimes drone strikes seem to be “*cure-all for terrorism*” (OS p.20 #2) and exactly this sensation is why the strong oversight is needed. Such confessions in a speech open up the ‘human-side’ of the speaker that makes an argumentation of strong oversight and control even more credible. The message is the following: after all it is tempting to use lethal drone strikes as a solution, but you should believe me, I am aware of that fact and this is why we pass guidance. Such rhetoric strategy aims to convince the audience that everything is under control, there is no need to question that. The President further elaborates on this oversight, he reminds that Congress authorized the use of force and is briefed of each and every strike. Even in the well-known case of Anwar al Awlaki.

At this point, Obama turns to one of the most controversial issues about drone strikes: What if an American citizen is targeted? How is that even possible? The President was preparing to address this issue, I pointed out before, he also hinted it when described the threat. In order to reinforce his argument for the legality and strong oversight in case of Awlaki, Obama claims that he authorized the declassification of this action to “facilitate transparency”. With the declassification, he creates the feeling of ‘public oversight’ – when secrecy about an issue is not needed anymore to protect national security - and shows that there is nothing to hide, everything took place in accordance with law and values. Obama also claims that it would not be constitutional to kill an American citizen (no matter by what) without a due process. The question of due process and judicial process, the distinction between the two was discussed previously by Eric Holder. Very shortly the point is that even without a judicial process something still can be due, this is what the Constitution prescribes. The President continues with the construction of Awlaki’s character as an individual who definitely had to be eliminated. He highlighted that Awlaki went to a foreign country to fight against his own nation, he was seeking to kill fellow citizens. Neither the U.S. nor partners could have been able to capture him before Awlaki carries out an action. Obama also elaborates on Awlaki’s further actions to make sure the audience that there have been a serious history of events before a targeted kill was ordered on him. He also stresses again, that capture was not feasible and letting him flee would have been an irresponsible step. Tying back to the previous argument of oversight, President Obama says that he took every necessary step before Awlaki was killed, the Department of Justice and the Congress were both briefed. Furthermore, he stresses that there is a “high threshold” set, before any lethal action, which high threshold was also present in John Brennan’s speech as “high bar”. This threshold is true for each and every case, even if the target is not a U.S. citizen. Lethal actions are a ‘must’ in several cases, therefore an existence of a high bar that restricts who to eliminate in the argument is crucial. That means not only oversight, but control as well. Instead of supporting his argument with numbers (which are very high regarding drone strikes, so they lack of

convincing power) an argument of complicated procedures that all has to be passed before an actual shoot is used. For the same purpose, Obama further embeds drone technologies into a wider context, the “comprehensive counterterrorism strategy” in which they function. RPAs are constructed as one tool of a larger strategy, as he frames it “*we cannot use force everywhere that radical ideology takes root*” (OS p.23 #12-13). So the mindful use of RPAs is fixed in two ways. One, the internal rules of targeting procedures that provide oversight and control, and two, the larger-unit comprehensive counterterrorism strategy in which drones are embedded, provide further regulation over them. RPAs and their targeted actions have to fit in the strategy in order to be able to fight against terrorism.

In the following parts the President addressed briefly the counterterrorism strategy and Guantanamo Bay but not in relation to drone technologies.

#### **5.4. Standardized Plot of the Pro-Drone Narrative**

Based on the fine-grained analysis of the three speeches that I have presented, several standardized features of their plot and sub-narratives could be drawn up. This in itself is not a surprising observation, thus all speeches have very similar purpose, the difference between them is their ‘hows’ and focus. In broadly speaking, their aim is to contribute to a wider social debate of drones, more precisely they are positioned on the pro-side of that debate. Furthermore, all three speeches construct a certain vision of future, in which future drone technologies are present. Their purpose is not only to convince the audience about the necessity of employing drones on the battlefield now, but in the future as well. There is no other meaningful exit. There may be alternatives, other options, but Remotely Piloted Aircraft technology is the one to take. ‘This is the future of war’.

##### **5.4.1. Standard Characters – the Villain and the Hero**

As I have argued in the Material and Methods chapter, according to Propp the most important component of the tale is the function that an action of a character plays in the whole of the story (Propp, 1968, p.21 as cited in Czarniawska, 2004, p.77). That was clearly observable in the analyzed three speeches as well. Probably the most visible standardization is that of the characters and story-setting. There is always a villain, namely the al-Qa’ida and associated forces, which enemy is further divided into two parts. Enemy #1 – the ‘original opponent’ al-Qa’ida causing 9/11, who is now weak and close to become irrelevant. The weakening of the group is represented as a result of counterterrorism efforts and direct targeting of al-Qa’ida leadership. Enemy #1 is on its path to destruction. Enemy #2 – the

'new threat' affiliates continuously seeking to kill and do harm to Americans, is emerging and may pose imminent or significant threat to U.S. interests. Enemy #2 is very similar to enemy #1 of the pre-9/11 period. The standardized features of the villain are the following: stateless, law-violator, eager to kill innocents, preference of killing, incalculable, out of control, sparsely located.

The hero, is the current U.S. Administration, who has to fight against both enemies. The U.S. must finally and completely defeat al- Qa'ida and parallel to that it must also make affiliates incapable of conducting larger attacks. The hero has a tool for that, a weapon, that seems to conform law, ethics and all the other American values. This is a 'silver-bullet' or if I have to bring an example, its position resembles to that of the famous Excalibur sword. Drones are not yet completely unmanned devices (however based on the Integrated Roadmap their automation is planned<sup>17</sup>) therefore I would not identify it as a hero in itself yet. As a contrast, in the public discourse, drones are referred as if they were autonomous weapons: 'drone killed'; 'drone attacked'; 'drone hit the target' (Selchow, 2015, p.62). Opposed to the villain, the hero's standardized features are the following: nation, law-abiding, protects innocents, prefers capture, considered, controlled, organized.

#### **5.4.2. Story Setting – “Nation at War”**

These characters act and exist in a war setting, which is differently named but are very similarly constructed in the speeches. Holder frames it as a “nation at war”, Brennan clarifies that he prefers the use of term “war against al Qa' ida” but he also highlights that it is a “war that has to be won” and Obama calls it as a “war on terror” but also similarly to Brennan as a “war against al Qa' ida”. Not that much the naming is what really matters here. In case of the Holder and Obama speeches, a retrospective account of America's relationship to war could be observed. The aim of this historic embedding is to represent that this is not the first time the U.S. faces a war-situation, which argument avoids the feeling of an extraordinary situation. Furthermore it prepares space for the introduction of today's conflict. Why war setting is so crucial for all three speeches is that during wartime the Administration is authorized with extra power in order to protect the nation (eg.: use of lethal force on enemy). Without the status of war, any intervention on other country's territory could count as a simple unlawful aggression, invasion or terror. But war clarifies everything. Any action could be easily interpreted and communicated as counter-action or defense. The international law ensures a country the inherent right of self-defense, but there have to be good reasons behind. The focal point from which the armed conflict among the characters broke out is the

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<sup>17</sup> *The potential for improving capability and reducing cost through the use of technology to decrease or eliminate specific human activities, otherwise known as automation, presents great promise for a variety of DoD improvements.*” (Department of Defense, 2013, p.15)

9/11 terror attacks on the World Trade Center. This event evoked law-making that fixed in a written legislative act that the United States is at war against the Taliban, al-Qa'ida and associated forces. Other than the Constitution, the Authorization of the Use of Military Force (AUMF) is the referred document by the speeches that authorizes the “war against al-Qa'ida” and the use of any necessary force to that. AUMF is the quasi ‘declaration of war’, which is a necessary element of a war itself (war starts with declaration). The pre-9/11 period is also encountered by all of the speeches, where the U.S. is constructed as a naïve, non-prepared country. Such attitude is no more acceptable, thus it also indirectly contributed to the events of September, 11, 2001. So there is a cause - 9/11 – followed by a declaration, which is basically the traditional war-starting plot. However, this war is distinguished from a “conventional” or ‘traditional’ one, it is “different”. The enemy is a non-state actor, a terrorist group, therefore the armed conflict is not established between two or more states as it happened back in history. Basically the battlefield does not have territorial constraints, it largely depends on the location of the enemy.

At the time of the speeches, 9/11 took place more than a decade ago, Osama bin Laden was already eliminated, so a question about the necessity of war on terror became relevant. In order to ‘re-stabilize’ the war setting, enemy #2 is introduced in all of the texts: affiliates. The threat posed by affiliates means that war did not come to an end with the death of bin Laden. It is further reinforced by the construction of a “continuous threat” suggesting that the war continues till the future elimination of that threat. As it follows, all three speeches hold similar visions about the future of war and warfare as well.

### **5.4.3. Laws and Values**

What is also standardized, is the argument for the use of remotely piloted technologies in the previously described setting. Revealed by the analysis, legality argument is the most standardized, thus this one is prominently present in all three speeches. This sub-narrative as (I called it during my investigation) rests on 3 pillars: domestic law, broader international law and law of war principles. Their legality under domestic law is backed up by the Constitution and the AUMF, furthermore in the Obama speech the Presidential Policy Guidance is also included. The same argument under broader international law is primarily supported by the right of self-defense. While in the narrower set – law of war – an argument for drone’s conformity with the principles of proportionality, humanity, distinction and necessity is used. How the 3 speeches construct this sub-narrative of course differs, but the key points of the story the ‘skeleton’ is the same. American values are connected to the legality argument. All speeches remark that the United States is not only the nation of war but the nation of laws and values as well. The core values that have to be defended are security, liberty and justice, which are the “founding ideas” of the United States of America.

The whole argument for the necessity of counteraction in order to prevent attacks and stop the threat rests on the security value. State-security is the 'larger cause' for which the U.S. has to fight. Interestingly, security is more treated as a value than a condition that further mystifies the mission. What is constructed almost equally important is the value of justice. All legality arguments aim to support counterterrorism actions' (including the use of drones) conformity to law. Laws must be kept and shall not be violated. Moreover, Obama calls the war as a "just war" further reinforcing that it is not only fought on a legal basis, but also for justice. Other values such as accountability, transparency and democracy are also components of the construction, these are rather prominent when the targeting processes and prosecutions are unfold by the speakers.

#### **5.4.4. Civilian and Military Losses**

Another component that has certain standard elements in the speeches is the collateral damage sub-narrative. The argument for the protection of civilian and innocent lives is deeply entangled and interwoven with other narratives in the speeches (ethics, legality, conformity with law of war etc.). Self-evidently, innocent death is constructed as clearly unwanted, and military drone technologies are the only devices which are capable of minimizing the loss of civilian lives. Despite of the fact that Holder does not discuss drone technologies in too much detail (his speech rather created a firm basis for further discussion by claiming that these technologies are not banned) he highlights this feature of the technology: "*civilian casualties can be minimized or avoided altogether*" (HS p.21 #11). Closely connected to this, the precision and selectivity drone technologies is also kind of standardized, thus this is the source of the technology's capability of reducing collateral damage. Despite of all the efforts, civilian death may happen accidentally in wartime, which remark is also mentioned by the narrators.

Not only civilian death matters in the speeches, the life of troops and servicemen is equally important. Another standard feature of drones by the speakers to make them more wanted is that they are remote. Remote targeting however should be explained in detail, because even if this is the one of largest advantage of drones over conventional alternatives, this is the source of greater controversies as well. After Vietnam and Afghanistan, where hundreds of American soldiers died, no one wants to put them in such danger again. Therefore an argument for bringing as many servicemen as possible home, and use drones in combat seems to be an attractive vision. It is regularly mentioned that troops are in high risk on the battlefield, for instance the example of bin Laden's elimination is used as an extraordinary situation, that posed unacceptable risk on U.S. military personnel. The message behind is: bin Laden's elimination would have been less dangerous if it had been conducted by drones.

#### **5.4.5. Standard Process**

The circumstances when targeted kills should be used also seems to be correlating. In all three speeches, capture preference is emphasized, while lethal actions should be taken only if capture is “not feasible”. But when it comes to targeted kills, an individual has to pass series of stages till s/he gets eliminated. All three speeches construct a mindful, complex process that is full of checks and balances, certain control and oversight mechanisms. There are great amounts of decisions in the process that has to be made (eg.: weighing costs of inaction, making sure that the targeted person is the really pursued one, does that person pose an imminent threat etc.) and there is always a ‘way back’, if one does not fit into the criteria it will not be eliminated. The use of lethal force and drone technologies are constructed to be happening in last resort only, when there is a near certainty/high level of confidence that no civilians will be injured or killed in a strike. The aim of this construction is to convince the audience that drones are not used “casually”, quite the opposite. If someone is eliminated by a drone strike, there must have been a great reason for that. All of the texts brought the example of Anwar al Awlaki, probably because his targeted kill as a U.S. citizen provoked larger controversies within the American society. I could identify him as a ‘standard example’ on whom the complicated process of ordering an actual drone strike could be best represented.

## **6. Conclusion**

The first and foremost aim of this Master Thesis was to investigate how the sociotechnical imaginary of military drone technologies is constructed by politico-administrative actors of the Obama Era. In order to answer my research question, *how did the major speeches of politico-administrative actors during the Obama Administration participate in the construction of the sociotechnical imaginary of Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies*, I decided to analyze three speeches from ‘highly relevant’ people of the topic. The first one was ex- Attorney General Eric Holder’s who as the Head of the Department of Justice stands for the legal aspects, including the use of drones in combat. The second speech, by ex- CIA Director John Brennan represents the operational side, thus the drone program is directly supervised by the CIA. And third one, by the ex- U.S. President Barack Obama (also the Commander-in-Chief) represents the final executive power and its responsibility for the whole drone program. The relevance of these three high-level persons in the formation of any imaginary and future-vision of Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies is unquestionable. To be able to reveal what imaginary of drones is attempted to constitute and how, I used narrative analysis as a tool to answer my questions.

The three speeches gradually introduced the drone as a legal and moral option to take in the war on terror. In order to participate in the building of a successful sociotechnical imaginary of drones constructing them as legal entities is not enough in itself. Sociotechnical imaginaries are always closely tied to the future. In order to create a “*bright future imaginary*” (Felt, 2015, p.105) of the technology and make people believe that these weapons are the options to take, RPAs need to be represented also as inherently moral entities. To achieve this aim, various speech strategies and sub-narratives were utilized. In the following sub-sections of my Conclusion, I will encounter these speech strategies and also how a story of the moral and legal drone was established.

### **6.1. Speech Strategies**

Having analyzed the material, we can observe differences even though the three speeches have a quasi standardized plot. What is in common with the three speech acts is that in the end they all come together in order to contribute to the wider narrative of the sociotechnical imaginary of U.S. military drones. They all add to the legitimacy and acceptance of the technology and as it follows, their standardized plot is important to discuss. It includes all arguments that are intentionally padded and stressed along the speeches in order to build the vision of drones as legal and moral entities. Drones are needed and clearly wanted options to take when it comes to warfight. At the same time alternatives should be

enlightened as less capable, less moral and even less legal options. To achieve that, collectively held values and memories are mobilized within the speeches. Each and every characteristic of the technology is and should be represented as complying with these “founding ideas”.

However, the moment of time, the position of the speakers, and the context in which the speeches were embedded result in a variation of employed speech strategies.

The speeches build on one another chronologically, so they have not only an internal speech strategy, but also an external one. Following the timeline of the speech acts, they seem to follow a ‘broadening logic’ in terms of what and how much they cover. Based on the comparison of the three speeches, they seem to follow a well structured logic, where the Holder speech is the ‘introduction’, only very briefly touches upon the technology itself, it rather discusses the legal issues such as prosecution of terrorist suspects. It does not mean that his speech participates less in the imaginary building than the others. It does a nice preparatory work for the following debates, provides a firm legality argument for targeted kills (including drones), represents in detail the prosecution process (what derives from the capture preference). In case of sensitive issues, how a theme is introduced and then released to circulate has to be mindfully constructed. One cannot simply break in on the audience and say, here we have killing robots and we already use them on the battlefield.

Brennan’s speech goes further it is more focused on the technology itself than Holder’s. With the discussion of the ethics, efficacy of the President’s counterterrorism strategy (especially including drones) he sharpened his say on the legality, ethics, wisdom and the high standards of the use of drones. This broader scope provides a background for the future presidential speech, moreover discusses certain focal points in detail (eg. standards). Discussing certain contestable issues before the larger, inclusive speech of the President has two functions. First, these issues were once opened up and closed by a speech, so if the President encounters these points again these are opened and closed by the second (or even third) time, that stabilizes these sub-parts of the sociotechnical imaginary (Felt, 2015, pp. 117-118). For instance the legality issue is opened up and closed three times by the three speeches, the topic of legality is exhaustingly discussed. Second, it is unnecessary for the President to discuss these topics in large detail, thus they had been before. He can touch upon them, but in the end of the day he does not have to deliver a three hour long speech, just not to leave any important aspect out.

Temporality is only one factor that has an effect on how stories are told. The foci of the speeches and the strategy of storytelling greatly depend on the position of the speaker as well. After the comparison of the three texts the most easily recognizable structural differences are their focus points and the moment of the actual ‘entrance of the drone’ into their plot.



As I have already touched upon, Eric Holder's speech in terms of emphasis differs from the other two, thus it is more focused on the legality and lawfulness of surveillance, targeting and the use of lethal force than on the technology itself. The entrance of the drone happens in the third quarter of the speech, so relatively late compared to the other two plots. The drone lands on a robust argument for the lawfulness of use of lethal force in cases when the target actively seeks to kill Americans, poses an imminent threat, elimination is applicable with the law of war and his/her capture is not feasible. What may provide an explanation for this particular speech strategy is first the already discussed temporal context (first speech in chronology), and second the setting and his own position.

His speech was delivered at the Northwestern University School of Law in Chicago, as it was discussed in the Contextualization sub-chapter as well, which is a prominent educational institute. It is eye-catching that Holder's position as an Attorney General – Head of Department of Justice – fits to the material setting of his performance. Probably as the Attorney General, Holder would have dedicated more space to the questions of legality anyways, but his match of position and setting shifted the focus even more to the 'law-direction'. Speeches are not delivered 'accidentally', careful planning, speechwriting takes place before they are performed. Holder's speech reflects that fine planning, the focus, the place and his position establish a setting in which his claims on the lawfulness of the use of targeted lethal force have a sensation of strong credibility.

The first and foremost purpose of this speech was to construct a strong legality argument, on which the 'drone can land'. Therefore late entrance of the drone in the plot seems to be a logical speech strategy to employ. Holder's speech provides a reference for the following speech acts, lawfulness was exhaustingly discussed, so the other speakers can focus on other aspects as well.

In John Brennan's speech a different strategy could be observed, where the entrance of the drone happens after the introduction and a brief reflection on past and current counterterrorism strategy. Here, the focus is on the technology, so the entrance must have happened relatively early in the plot. The drone program is coordinated mainly by the CIA, with the President's approval. As the Head of the CIA, John Brennan is expected to put emphasis on these aspects that are directly connected to the use of military drone technologies and not others. Brennan attempts to construct a different kind of legitimacy than Holder, while in the Holder speech the acceptance or legitimacy is based on legality, here it is rooted in the successes of the counterterrorism strategy including the use of drones. As a 'co-coordinator' of the program, this strategy of storytelling is not surprising. In the largest proportion of speech the sub-narratives are directly connected to the technology itself. For instance the use of technology is legal (the focus is on the drone's legality not on the

targeting or the use of lethal force), wise (the features of the technology makes them wise options to take) and ethical (the technology itself conforms to the law of war).

In his speech, Obama employs a speech strategy in which the technology is constituted as the solution for the 'problem'. As a Commander-in-Chief, he has to construct a complex problem, against which the U.S. must fight and for which the drone technology could be the only acceptable solution. The Commander-in-Chief is the leader of the whole military arsenal, therefore he must be able to clearly identify the threat and plan of a successful strategy against the threat. Or at least, this is an imaginary that people have of a Chief Commander so in order to deliver a credible speech act, Barack Obama has to conform to this imaginary.

In Obama's storytelling strategy the entrance of the drone happens two times. I called the first during my analysis as the 'first entrance of the drone' while the second as the 'real entrance of the drone' as this one is followed by the pro-drone narrative. Between the two entrances, the complexification of the threat takes place against which drones as elements of the comprehensive counterterrorism strategy are constructed as tools to employ. In Obama's speech strategy, the legitimacy of the use of drones rests on their 'successful' applicability against the enemy, which is the reason why the real entrance happens after the construction of the threat.

It is more than evident how speech strategies differ greatly depending on the position of the speakers. After the analysis and comparison of the three speech acts, it became clear that even if they do it differently, all of them aim to serve as adds to the legitimacy of military drone technologies.

## **6.2. Legal Drone**

The narrative for a technology's lawfulness and legality is least important in terms of future, basically for two reasons. First, what is legal today is not necessarily legal tomorrow and second, what is legal is not always accepted in the society. Law and the legal system 'in principle' should stay to some extent in the state of fluidity in order to follow the changes in the society. For instance, the consumption of marihuana may be illegal in one day and completely legal on the other. The reverse is of course also possible. However, legality sub-narrative of drones was so strong in all three speeches that it could not be neglected.

The legality of military drones is not recorded by any written document, regulation or legislative act, so what the speakers could do was an indirect argumentation for their legality. For instance, Eric Holder said that the use of UAVs is not banned neither by domestic, nor by international law. As a result, what is not banned (bans should be fixed in forms of regulations) is allowed. Because of the lack of regulation on the field, constructing a

successful sociotechnical imaginary is even more important to avoid a legislation that bans the use of military drone technologies in combat (similarly to the use of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons). Stressing the legality of drones is obviously not enough to build any imaginary of the technology in itself, but it is also clear that in this case an argument for their legality is not purely a legitimizing or explanatory strategy for the past actions. UAVs are planned to be employed in the future of warfare (DoD Unmanned Integrated Roadmap), therefore a ban on their use should be clearly avoided or if I go further, a regulation on their legal use should be enacted. In order to achieve this aim, the technology must be constituted as a moral entity that solves those ethical, humane and practical issues that the other options (eg.: conventional forces) were incapable to do so.

### **6.3. Future**

One thing is very important to point out before I turn to the discussion of ‘what problem the drones solve’, is that from background research it is known that drone technologies are clearly present in the desired future of warfare. They are certainly planned to be there. The Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap of the Department of Defense (Human machine autonomies Weber), which document falls out of the scope of my analysis, provides several hints of the anticipated future of warfare.

*„Unmanned systems continue to deliver new and enhanced battlefield capabilities to the warfighter. While the demand for unmanned systems continues unabated today, a number of factors will influence unmanned program development in the future.”<sup>18</sup>*

In the three speeches, drones were constituted as technologies that can avoid the pitfalls of conventional force interventions. The basic problem what the drone solves is the loss of U.S. military personnel and innocent/civilian lives in an armed conflict. Today, thus the technology is not fine-developed yet or in Brennan’s words “perfect weapon does not exist” what drones can promise is a reduced amount of civilian and soldier death. Ground troop forces are still needed in combat, currently drones serve the ‘sole’ purpose of supporting the ground troop operation. However the envisioned future is the more automation of drones where the amount of ‘unnecessary death’ could be reduced to the margin of error.

*„[...] unmanned systems and an explanation of the requirements process used to deliberately develop those capabilities to achieve improved efficiency, effectiveness, and survivability and to reduce the burden on manpower at lower costs while still meeting future operational requirements. The perspective establishes that future unmanned systems*

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted from the Executive Summary of the DoD Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap. Retrieved from: <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/DOD-USRM-2013.pdf>

*must [...] Be more effective through features such as greater automation, improved performance, and flexible use of capabilities [...]*<sup>19</sup>

(Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap, p.6)

Weber and Suchman in their work on “*Human-machine autonomies*” also raised attention to these future oriented attempts of drone-automation (Suchman, Weber, 2015).

As I have argued elsewhere, a sociotechnical imaginary is always connected to a certain vision of future (Jasanoff, Kim, Sperling, 2007, p.2). To represent this future of warfare as a feasible one only through drone technologies, they had to be constructed by the speakers as clearly moral entities. In the next sub-chapter I conclude how the drone became constructed as a moral technology in the three speeches.

## **6.4. Moral Technology**

### **6.4.1. Ethical**

A strong argumentation for drones being moral technologies is that under the given circumstances, these weapons are ethical. Ethics is a relatively fluid phenomenon. What is regarded as ethical greatly depends on the spatial, temporal and cultural context. As already discussed, in case of drones their ethical nature must be understood in a war setting. The technology is constructed as “accountable”, due to the “strong oversight” that characterizes the procedure of ordering a drone-strike. The strikes are “not conducted casually”, so not anytime and anywhere the U.S. wants. Accountability and strong oversight together provides the sensation, that any drone attack is done by “extraordinary care” moreover, checks and balances (informing the Congress for instance) are also embedded in the procedure. The “heavily constrained” manner further reinforces a vision where drones are used only in “last resort”, so only in cases when other solutions such as capture would fail. As constructed by the speeches, this well-thought-out nature of drone strikes is one source of their ethics. The other source is based on the law of war principles, which draws moral obligations as well. Principles of humanity, proportionality and distinction are employed in order to constitute the ethics of the technology. Drones are ethical because they are humane, so do not cause necessary human suffering, proportional, so the anticipated collateral damage is not excessive to the anticipated military advantage. Last, drones are constituted to be ethical because they are distinctional, so due to their precision, civilians are not killed intentionally. With the law of war principle of distinction, we have arrived to the second sub-narrative that is employed by the speeches to construct drones as completely moral technologies.

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted from the Executive Summary of the DoD Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap. Retrieved from: <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/DOD-USRM-2013.pdf>

#### **6.4.2. Protection of Life (Innocents and Troops)**

The main problem that the drone solves is the unnecessary death of both innocent civilians and military personnel, which regularly happens in conventional warfight. In order to ‘cure’ this problem, drones are constituted as the currently existing best options to take. This argumentation is supported by unique properties of the technology. Drones are sold as “selective”, “discriminate” and “precise” technologies which are used when there is a “near-certainty” that civilians will not be harmed in an operation. Their advantageous characteristics are also further sharpened by comparison to conventional, where the civilian losses are told to be huge opposed to drones. And no one wants the U.S. to kill innocents, including women and children. The technology is moral, because it kills fewer civilians than any alternatives.

The ‘other side’ of losses is the risk of mass soldier death. The United States had enough experience in that, so to say Vietnam War and Afghanistan War live in the American collective memory as national tragedies. As the analysis revealed, a sub-narrative of ‘Bringing Troops Home’ building on the existing Vietnam and Afghanistan syndromes in the American society is utilized to make drones even more wanted. Morality of bringing troops home derives from the U.S.’s ownership of the technology that can avoid the loss of own troops so own citizens. With such a tool in hand, the refusal of its use would be completely immoral, thus it saves soldiers’ lives. The same is true for innocents. If the U.S. is able to kill selectively terrorists because has a tool that is capable of it, not using that technology and putting both civilians and troops in danger would be greatly immoral. Closely connected to this, there are cases when INaction is also not acceptable.

In all three speeches it is pointed out that there are situations, when without an intervention with drones more innocents would die, so in these cases “doing nothing is not an option”. Costs of INaction construct rather the morality of the use of drones, not that much the of weapon. The issue is similar to the one of “Protection of Life”, if the United States owns a tool that provides reduced civilian casualties, than the U.S. must use it. The drone was engineered in order to cause less innocent death through its surveillance capacities and narrow ranged missiles. If the costs of INaction are high, not using the technology is immoral.

## 6.5. The Sociotechnical Imaginary of the Drone

From the previous sub-sections, the two main pillars of the sociotechnical imaginary of RPA technologies became clear-cut: they are constituted as legal and moral entities. However, what it means precisely remained open. Hence, in this final sub-section I attempt to draw together all the results, and discuss how they conclude to the sociotechnical imaginary of the drone.

As it was unpacked in the Analysis and Results chapter, the sociotechnical imaginary of drones is constructed of various elements. First and foremost, the RPA of the pro-drone narrative is “precise” (OS p.18 #1), “accurate” (BS p.28 #4) and “discriminate” (BS p.27 #12). These features ensure the “humanity” (BS p.15 #10), “ethics” (BS p.15 #13) and “legality” (OS p.14 #8) of the technology. RPAs are represented as weapon systems that enable a reduced number of innocent and civilian deaths, resulting from their “surgical precision” (BS p.16 #14), accuracy and discriminative way of killing. In theory, such weapons are apparently humane and ethical if it is used against terrorists aiming to attack the United States. In reality, numbers contradict to this imaginary. As Jennifer Gibbson pointed out *“there is nothing precise [...] in the deaths of 28 unknown people [...] for every ‘bad guy’ the US goes after”* (Gibson, n.d., as cited in Ackermann, 2014, para.8). The aim of my conclusion is not to judge the morality of the speeches. I tied back to Gibbson’s claim to underpin that the speakers do not talk about facts, but they are attempting to construct a vision of the technology that has nothing to do with the reality. The convincing power of the speeches (and their emplotment) is the key, not their veracity (Bruner, 1991, p.13). Arguments for their “humanity” and “ethics” through “precision”, “accuracy” and “discrimination” contribute to the establishment of drones as moral entities.

Second, drone technologies are “effective” (OS p.13. #15). According to the pro-drone narrative, their efficacy derives from their precision, remote nature and from their capability of real-time targeting. If the technology enables its operator to eliminate precisely the person s/he wants to, then the success was achieved without collateral costs. Collateral damage is not effective. Innocent death creates more enemies than there was before. Furthermore, drones are effective because less American soldiers are endangered. The pilot’s life is not at risk and less ground troops are needed for a successful combat. Therefore, as it was argued by the speakers, military drone technologies are more effective compared to conventional forces (OS p.17 #10-17).

Third, drone technologies are “accountable” (OS p.15 #6). This element of their sociotechnical imaginary rather refers to the network and procedures that operate behind drone-strikes. However, RPAs should be understood as weapon-systems not as single

weapons. Therefore the accountability of the backstage procedures is equally part of the sociotechnical imaginary of drones. Their accountability rests on the “strong oversight” (OS p.20 #3), “high threshold” (OS p.22 #5), and the “heavily constrained” (OS p.14 #16) nature of targeting procedures. In the narratives of the speeches, drone strike operations are represented as ordered only in last resort, when “capture is not feasible” (HS p.19 #10). Targeted lethal force is used only after long and complex chain of decisions and choices, and in the meantime Congress is regularly briefed. In the speeches, the weapon-system is constituted as accountable as possible. The accountability of drones is closely related to their “lawfulness” (HS p.16 #10). It is hard to defend the application of a technology if it is legal but not accountable. Accountability of drones conforms to one of the core American values: democracy. The regular informing of the Congress provides democratic overview of drone operations that aims to increase the public acceptability of the technology.

What is the sociotechnical imaginary of drones? The drone is a precise, discriminate, remote, humane, ethical, legal, heavily constrained, moral, effective and accountable weapon-system. They are the best options to take. They are the solution. And finally, they should be chosen.

By all three spokespersons of the Obama Administration Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies are constituted as such. Based on the work that they have done in the three speeches, their participation in the construction of the sociotechnical imaginary of drones as legal and moral entities is unquestionable. How this imaginary will be circulated and repeated in the wider social arena was not in the focus of this Master Thesis. However, it shall not be forgotten that the analyzed speeches are only the first steps towards the construction of a successful sociotechnical imaginary. The ‘drone imaginary’ must be reopened and closed, rehearsed and spread in various realms (eg.: in the media) to have a real effect on the future of warfare. The success of the imaginary also depends on the strength of critical voices and the arising controversies around it, and of course even the best constituted sociotechnical imaginary can fail due to incalculable events. Only future can reveal, whether the pro-drone narratives and the legal-moral sociotechnical imaginary of RPAs are successful or not. The question remains open: Will we wage our wars with automated unmanned vehicles or not?

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Information from Predator datasheet: <http://www.ga-asi.com/predator-xp>

Information from Reaper datasheet: <http://www.ga-asi.com/predator-b>

National Defense University (colleges and centres):  
<http://www.ndu.edu/Academics/Colleges-Centers/>

National Defense University website (vision and mission):  
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<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/28/503>

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## **9. Abstract (English version)**

The use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies is greatly controversial for various reasons. Probably the greatest concern regarding drones derives from the unregulation of their use. The international law and the law of war neither ban nor rule over the use of RPAs. However recently, military drone technologies are regularly employed by the United States in overseas operations against non-state actors. The number of drone strikes significantly increased under the two terms of the Obama Administration. Compared to the previous Administration far more drone attacks were conducted than in the Bush Era. As it follows, this period of time seems to be the most relevant to investigate. The American practice opens a couple of legitimate questions. Researchers and Scholars from the field of Science and Technology Studies have approached the issue from several perspectives, however a couple of questions remained unanswered so far. One of the open questions is how the drone program is managed to be politically and publicly accepted weapons within the American political context.

The aim of this Master Thesis is to answer this question: *How did the major speeches of politico-administrative actors during the Obama Administration participate in the construction of the sociotechnical imaginary of Remotely Piloted Aircraft technologies?* In order to be able to answer the Research Question, I used three political speeches for my analysis. The first is ex- Attorney General Eric Holder's speech on the legality of targeted strikes from March, 2012. The second one is ex- CIA Director John Brennan's speech on the ethics and efficacy of the drone and counterterrorism program from April, 2012. The last one is ex- U.S. President Barack Obama's speech from 2013 on the comprehensive counterterrorism-policy. I analyzed the speeches with the help of narrative analysis. On the first level of analysis I observed the speeches as forms of narratives, while on the second level I examined how they come together and contribute to a larger societal narrative.

As the Research Question also suggests, I approached my results with the lens of sociotechnical imaginaries. The concept of sociotechnical imaginaries draws attention to how the application of certain technologies is stabilized within the public discourse. Military drone technologies are not exception. The Thesis is especially focused on the making of the sociotechnical imaginary of drones. By examining the argumentative strategies of the analyzed speeches it became visible how an imaginary of drones as ethical and moral entities are constructed. The theoretical framework enabled me to draw my conclusions and to see how military drones are constituted as clearly wanted technologies of warfare.

## 10. Abstrakt (Deutsche Version)

Der Einsatz von “Remotely Piloted Aircraft” Technologien (RPAs) sorgt aus diversen Gründen für Kontroversen. Vermutlich besteht das größte Bedenken in der fehlenden Regulierung von Drohneneinsätzen. Der Einsatz von RPAs wird weder vom Völkerrecht noch vom Kriegsvölkerrecht verboten oder reguliert. Die militärische Drohnentechnologie wird jedoch aktuell von den Vereinigten Staaten regelmäßig in Übersee-Operationen gegen nicht staatliche Akteure eingesetzt. Die Anzahl von Drohnenangriffen ist während der zwei Amtszeiten der Obama-Regierung im Vergleich zur Bush-Ära erheblich gestiegen. Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit dieser Periode scheint daher relevant. Die amerikanische Drohnenpolitik wirft einige legitime Fragen auf. Dieser Sachverhalt wurde von ForscherInnen und ExpertInnen aus dem Bereich der Wissenschafts- und Technikforschung aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven untersucht, jedoch bleiben einige Fragen unbeantwortet. Eine dieser offenen Fragen besteht darin, wie politische und öffentliche Akzeptanz für das Drohnenprogramm in dem US-politischen Kontext erreicht wird.

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit setzt sich zum Ziel, folgende Frage zu beantworten: Wie haben die bedeutenden Reden von politischen Akteuren während der Obama-Regierung zur Bildung von “sociotechnical imaginary” von Remotely Piloted Aircraft Technologien beigetragen? Um diese Frage zu beantworten, habe ich drei politische Reden analysiert. Die erste Rede stammt von Ex-Generalbundesanwalt Eric Holder aus März 2012 und thematisiert die Legalität von gezielten militärischen Angriffen. Die zweite Rede wurde im April 2012 von Ex-CIA-Direktor John Brennan gehalten, und dreht sich um die Ethik und Effizienz von Drohnen- und Anti-Terrorprogramm. Bei der dritten Rede handelt es sich um einen Auftritt von Ex-US-Präsidenten Barack Obama im Jahre 2013, bei der es um die “comprehensive counterterrorism-policy” ging. Unter Einsatz von narrativer Analyse habe ich die Reden zunächst als eigenständige Narrative betrachtet, während ich auf der zweiten Ebene die Reden als zusammenhängenden Teil eines größeren “societal narrativ” untersucht habe.

Wie die Forschungsfrage andeutet, habe ich für die Ergebnisse der Arbeit eine Herangehensweise verwendet, die sich an die “sociotechnical imaginaries” anlehnt. Das Konzept der “sociotechnical imaginaries” fokussiert sich darauf, wie die Anwendung von bestimmten Technologien im öffentlichen Diskurs stabilisiert werden kann. Militärische Drohnentechnologie stellt diesbezüglich keine Ausnahme dar. Diese Arbeit setzt sich besonders mit dem “making of the sociotechnical imaginary” von Drohnen auseinander.



Durch die Analyse von argumentativen Strategien dieser Reden wird ersichtlich, wie die Vorstellung der Drohnen als ethische und moralische Entitäten aufgebaut wird. Der theoretische Bezugsrahmen ermöglichte mir die Schlussfolgerung zu ziehen und zu sehen, wie militärische Drohnen als erwünschte Militärtechnologien konstruiert werden.