

IMPACTS OF THE US DRONE STRIKES IN FATA

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ABSTRACT

The US Drone Strikes in FATA have been carried out since 2004. They are basically conducting against the hideouts of militants in tribal belt, which are fighting against the NATO forces in Afghanistan and targeting security forces in Pakistan. The accuracy and preciseness of the US Drone strikes are up to mark. Whereas; on the basis of wrong information those strikes sometime target innocent people or indirectly cast impact over the socio economic fabric of the society, like killing of the single bread earner of a family compel the young children to roll back their education and start searching for the haunt of job.

Keywords: Drone, Impacts, Tribal area, Militants, Sophistication, Precise, Breed earner

INTRODUCTION

Drone technology, which is one of the most sophisticated tools of 21st century warfare, is being used against the hideouts of militants in FATA by the US forces. It has successfully curbed the upper tier leadership of the militants in the area and made the US in disrupting the militant capabilities and networks. Furthermore, their operational capabilities have been utterly destroyed as a result a sharp decline has been seen in the nature of attacks in terms of both fatality and intensity as prior to the campaign, but natural phenomenon that every action has its reaction. So Drones are having some limited impacts too in FATA.

Therefore, one has to understand that in war, there are always limited options. So talking about militancy and terrorism, there would be bloodshed, human rights violation and killings. Similar is the case here in FATA episode. But in order to understand that weather phenomenon is in the interest of or against the interest, we have to compare the advantages and disadvantages of both sides. This is the well-known procedure of understanding the fathom of national interest or any other phenomenon. Like so far according to rough

estimate hardly three to four thousand people have been killed in the US Drone campaign. While so far we have lost roundabout fifty thousand people (Rafiullah Kakar, 2014). The economic loss caused by Drone is near to nothing while on the other side the economic damage by the hands of militants is in billions. Meanwhile dozens of HVI's had been killed due to Drone strikes. So the deep and impartial study will lead us that the Drone despite of few impacts are in the dire interest of Pakistan.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

The US Drone campaign which started from 2004 and the militants counter activities have greatly disturbed the socio psychological fabric of people living in conflict zones of FATA. Due to their activities the overall situation remains tense and traumatic. The Drones hover 24/7 in order to collect information about identification of targets. So as a result of continuous hovering, it preserves a constant atmosphere of fear. Though it is also a fact and people do believe, that it target militants but despite of it the people live in an atmosphere of stress, psychological insecurity and fear prevails in society in an unexpected way, because they believe that some time they target innocent on the basis of wrong information provided to the Drone operator. Alike strike on Gundi Kala, in which Mamana Bibi was killed and strike over local Jirga in 2011 in Datta Khel town of North Waziristan, resulted killing of 40 tribal *Masharan* (elders) are just two such flagrant examples (International Crisis Group 2013:12). It is quite disgusting as compared to property damage or compare to individual loss, as the constant sound nearly psychologically effect very common man in the area (New York, 2012:24).

EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

Extrajudicial killings by the above discussed actors are also one of the grave problems inside the FATA. As cited earlier, sometimes on the basis of wrong or faulty information, the US Drone target people that falls in the realm of extrajudicial killings or also known as civilian casualties. Furthermore, it is also very difficult task to ascertain the mindset of targeted person, as whether the person is civilian or suspected militant. In addition to this the US does not provide much information about each strike, means they do not reveal the line that is used in differentiation between noncombatant and

combatant (Christopher Rogers, 2010:20). One of the main controversies in the extrajudicial killings, are the direct and indirect participation in hostilities. The local people that provides food, shelter or ideological support to militants basically falls in the category of indirect participation in the hostilities. Though generally people consider such people as innocent but under the international law they are the supporters of militants and would be equally treated (*Ibid*). The extrajudicial killings by the US Drones are very low in ratio and it is due to faulty information provided by informers, who operating from ground.

CIVILIAN PROPERTY DAMAGE

Civilian property damage is also one of the main impacts of the US Drone strike in FATA. According to director of FATA Research Institute (an Islamabad based research institute covering socio, political aspects of FATA), Mansur Mehsud “people living in tribal area in a buildings called mud compounds, as on the prevailing culture of join family systems, several families live in each compound. In addition to this, the size of each compound is round about an acre, normally in each compound can find from 25-50 people” (Northrop Grumman, Bob Brown, 2014).

In a latest research conducted by Bureau Forensic Architecture, revealed the three different types of the US Drone sites in FATA, which were: (i) Houses, (ii) Seminary Schools (Madrassas), and (iii) Vehicles.

Furthermore the three salient feature of the research are:

1. From 2004 till 2014, 61% of total US Drone strikes have targeted domestic buildings in FATA, while total numbers of strikes so far in FATA are 380. In these 380 strikes, minimum 132 houses have been destroyed.
2. In total strikes over domestic buildings, at least 500 people are killed, out of which 222 were civilians, interestingly it was also revealed that chances of civilian casualties have been utterly vanished almost from past 18 months, due to the accurate maintained by Drone.
3. The research also revealed that strikes that took place at night is quietly deadly and furious as compare to attacks, which took place at day, because at night/evening families gather at home (Alice K. Ross, Jack Serle, 2014). A destruction of home not only makes a family homeless though it is structure, which is erected

after years of savings and a huge investment spend on its construction, therefore it is one of the great asset for every single family and mostly constructed once or twice in a lifetime.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OR HARDSHIPS

Federally-administrated tribal area of Pakistan is most underdeveloped part of the country, where already 60% people of the area are living below poverty line; unemployment is ranging from 60-80%, with very poor governance, so the Drone has further aggravated the economic situation of the area (Irfan-ud-Din, 2013:10). The economic hardships would be divided in to two sub categories; on state and individual level.

On the state level, so far, it has been seen great economic impact due to the ongoing layer of terrorism generally throughout the country but particularly in FATA, which has as an overall adverse effect over the economic pillar of country. The effects are in shape of flight capital from FATA, closure of industrial sector, decline of local tourism sector and in agricultural products, rapid increase in unemployment ratio due to Drone strikes, military operations and as well as due to militants activities and rise in inflation in prices of commodities in the area. So these activities are the product of the US Drone strike and associated forces in FATA.

While on the individual level, sometimes Drone targets civilians as a result, it dramatically alter the whole scenario for the family, especially when a single bread earner is killed in Drone strike whether as a civilian or militant. The casual injury of a single bread earner can create perdurable financial and psychological shocks to the affected family.

IMPACTS ON EDUCATION

Education is the sole tool that cans turnaround the fate of nations towards prosperity. But educational institutes are always the subject of victimhood in a conflict zones especially in terms of militancy. It is therefore victimized because these are the places where people become enlighten, moderate and replete themselves with thrust of knowledge. So with the presence of educational institutes the inhabitants of such society can't be exploited by someone else for their narrow interests.

It would be very interesting to note that so far not a single school has been hit by the US Drone since 2004 till present day.

Though the drone strikes in FATA indirectly have great impact over education. Alike some time the family members are killed in a strike, where then in order to look after the family and bear expenses, it is than necessary to find a job for himself. According Nadia (a Drone victim) “I am at ten and was at school, when Drone strike hit my house, killing my father and mother, so having no other family members, I than moved to my aunt’s house, in a nearby town and now she is looking after me. As having no source of income after demise of my parents, now I am off the school”. Like Nadia’s aunt, Habib Khan is another example who is supporting his deceased brother’s family, whom was killed in the US Drone strike. According to Habib Khan, “as already my economic condition was fragile but after taking the responsibility of my brother’s family now my ill’s further increased and I continuously borrow money from my friends in order to look after family”.

This is an outfall of the US Drone; the children will have to wind up their educational activities (Mahmood Ahmed). Furthermore this upshot of Drone regarding education is very common in tribal area and is one of the grave issues, which is further increasing the illiteracy ratio. While on other hand, the militants terrorize and forcing people not to send their children to schools as according to them it incarnates western or secular knowledge in the minds of our children’s, so as a result militants are routinely engaged in the destruction of schools by orchestrating violent strikes in FATA. According to FATA Secretariat report more than 450 schools have been utterly destroyed by militants. The demolition of schools has no doubt a negative impact over already fragile literacy rate, especially in term of female literacy rate. After the destruction of each school then the government fails to rebuild the affected school. So the education system is more affected by militants rather than the US Drone strikes (Wali Khan Shinwari, 2014).

DEGRADATION OF MILITANTS

Drones strikes in FATA have largely reduced the risk or threat of militant activities that were prevailing in the area due to heinous activities of militant organizations. The only tool that is reducing the risk and use by the US against theses militants is the Drone technology, which is operating in FATA since 2004.

To adopt a data driven approach towards the issue and study the overall data of Drone, it would not be wrong to say that the US is in

success in curbing terrorism in FATA, because sharp decrease has been seen in the lethality of terrorist's activities (Patric Johnson & Anoop K. Sarabhi, 2013:3). Therefore, one of the most important impacts of the US Drone is the "degradation effect." Degradation effect generally means that Drone has almost targeted high value individual (HVI) of militants. So if we further elaborate the concept is that the US Drone strikes have degraded the high profile or upper tier leadership of any militants in FATA (*Ibid*). As the paramount task of Drone campaign is to target the operational leadership of Al Qaeda, Afghan Taliban (Haqqani network) and Pakistani Taliban (TTP and other splinter groups). So far large numbers of operational leaders have been killed in FATA during various span of time (Michael J. Boyle, 2013:9). According to one report two-third or 20 out of total 30 upper tier leadership of Al Qaeda has been killed in Drone surgical strike campaign (*Reuters*, December 18, 2012). Following are the few names of upper tier leaderships or HVI's that became of drone strikes:

1. Baitullah Mehsud head of TTP killed in August 2009.
2. Molvi Nazeer Wazir head of South Waziristan Taliban killed in January 2013.
3. Wali Muhammad Toofan head of TTP suicide wing killed in January 2013.
4. Hakeem Ullah Mehsud head of TTP in November 2013.
5. Wali-ur-Rahman second in command of TTP killed on 29May, 2013 in N Waziristan.
6. Badruddin Haqqani third in command of Haqqani network killed in August 2012.
7. Ilyas Kashmiri head of Harkat-ul-Jihad al Islami 313 Brigade (HUJI) and a senior member of Al Qaeda killed in June 2011.
8. Abu Zaid al Iraqi, financial chief of Al Qaeda in Pakistan in February 2011.
9. Atiyah Abdul Rahman most senior member of Al Qaeda after Ayman al Zawahiri in August, 2011.
10. Abu Hafsal Shahri, operational chief of Al Qaeda in Pakistan, in September 2011.
11. Taj Gul Mehsud, senior deputy of Hakeem Ullah Mehsud.
12. Ibrahim Adam and Azmir Khan, most wanted militant in UK killed in N Waziristan.
13. Tahir Yaldeshov notable Uzbek fighter, in August, 2009.
14. Khan Muhammad, Deputy Commander of Molvi Nazeer in October, 2011.

15. Nek Muhammad Wazir, notorious Mujahidin commander killed in June 2004.
16. Janbaz Zadran, Haqqani's most senior member in October 2011.
17. Abddul Haq Turkestani, head of Eastern Turkestan Islamic Party in Feb, 2010.
18. Abu Yahya al Libi, most senior member of Al Qaeda killed in 2008.
19. Mustafa Abu Yazir, another most senior member of Al Qaeda killed in 2008.

DISRUPTION OF MILITANTS

This is another important progeny of Drone strikes. Disruption of militants means that militants are having their specific or stronghold areas from where they operate in a cohesive or systematic way. One of the examples of such area is Wanna, Shakai (the stronghold of Nek Muhammad Wazir in North Waziristan) and subdivision of Wanna, Pakistani army marched towards it in 2004, but failed to get it and concluded a truce known as Shakai agreement. The area was under the full de facto control of Nek Muhammad Wazir and his associates (Mark Mazzetti, 2013:240). So Drones have so far destroyed dozens of their networking cells and compounds in strikes. As a result of it they are now totally disrupted (Irfan-ud-Din, 2013:10). With their disruption, great decline have been seen in their violent activities both in terms of its lethality and intensity. It is therefore because it has totally undermined their operational activities (Patrick Johnson & Anoop K.Sarabhi, 2013:3). The main logic behind the whole paragraph is Drone strikes have created an immense pressure over the militants, as a result they are now having a loose recruitments and fracture would lead eventually to collapse (Michael J. Boyle, 2013:240).

The disruption was also revealed, in an interview given by a local militant Commander to Pir Zubair Shah (freelance journalist from Waziristan), "we don't even sit together to chat anymore," two other local commanders described the sophistication of Drone technology, "It has compelled militants to adopt new techniques of warfare. We have stopped using electronic devices, we do not gather in huge numbers, even not in mosques and spend nights outside for safety" (David Rohde, 2012).

COMMUNITY TRUST DEFICIT

One of the impacts of Drone strike in FATA is the community trust deficit. As cited in the last chapter, that Drones operates on the basis of data provided by informers by placing a locator chip near the target from ground, which basically guide the hovering Drone, without their collaboration it is quite difficult to strike the prime target. The placing of alleged tracking or locator chip has greatly contributed in creating the perception of mistrust among the local peoples (Mahmood Ahmed). Thus presence of informer and the behavior of militants towards informer is the primary cause of community trust deficit in FATA. As a result of it, the people do not talk to one another over the ongoing layer of militancy because they fear that the second person might be informer or might be having any kind of relation with militant organizations. David Rohde described the situation, “My time in captivity filled me with enormous sympathy for the Pakistani civilians, trapped between the Taliban and American technology” (David Rohde, 2012).

IMPACTS ON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Drone strikes have great impact on social and cultural gatherings. People abstain from participating in any such kind of activities. Social and cultural activities may be funeral or condolence prayer, recreational activities, wedding ceremonies, community functions, sitting in Hujras (community level gatherings, where day to day affairs are discussed and settled), attending Jirga’s and any kind of function where people are gathered in large numbers. Though Drone has hardly targeted such gatherings but they generally believe that some militants may enter such gathering, as a result the Drone will target it. Interestingly in order to mold unprecedented anti American public opinion of the locals, mostly the militants exaggerate the claim of civilian deaths after each strike, so they use the claim in order to gain sympathy from the local people and provoke anger regarding Drones (David Rohde, 2012).

One of incidents of the same nature was occurred on 17th of March 2011 in Datta Khail, where group of tribal people with a traditional turbans were gathered near a bus stop for a Jirga. The tribal Malik’s were present along with some government employees. The tribal elders sat in two separate row as in every Jirga they follow the same pattern. The Jirga was basically convened to settle a dispute between two parties over a Chromite mine nearby. At least four local

Taliban leaders belong to Haqqani network were also present in the Jirga. The hovering Drone dropped a hellfire missile, killing some 40 people instantly. This strike was prime example of signature strike (Irfan-ud-Din, 2013:100). A notable psychologist from Peshawar, during in an interview stated that, “Drone is one of the major cause of psychological issues in FATA. The Drone has produced a kind of phobia of avoiding any kind social gatherings, which ultimately leads to behavioral changes (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), Schizophrenia and Post traumatic stress disorder (*Ibid*).

Thus it has shown that no doubt that Drones have negative impact over daily life especially in Drone operating areas, where people feel unsafe and powerless. Though attending such kinds of social and cultural gatherings play very important role in refreshing nerves and gaining innovative ideas, but now they are psychological despondent.

CONCLUSION

The above variables have shown that the US Drone strikes that are being carried out inside the FATA is in parallel with the interest of country. This negligence or confrontation policy being adopted on the behalf of Pakistani civilian government regarding the US strikes is also quite understandable. The Drone carry very sophisticated strikes, the collateral damaged is present but very less. While it is being projected and exaggerated by the rightest parties and media that innocent people are being killed in it. It is therefore because Pakistan is having somewhat ideological identity. So, open support to the strikes will act an antidotal to the state ideological narration. Thus the ground story is quite satisfactory, especially in terms of accuracy.

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