"These Aren't the Drones You're Looking For"
Secrecy and the Weapon Legitimation Process, 2009-2013

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Abstract

This thesis examines variations in specific framing used by the Obama administration and New York Times journalists during the public legitimation process of armed unmanned aerial vehicles. It employs a theoretical framework that examines the socially thick agency created through the interaction of practices, background knowledge and the state of the symbiotic relationship between the two communities. This research was completed by using Atlas.ti software to assist in interpretive coding and analysis of New York Times articles and official Obama administration statements from January 2009-May 2013. By examining these sources, this thesis illuminates the process by which particular constellations of socially thick agency made each community's specific framing possible in a given context. This also illustrates how the social definition of drone technology was constructed and how the Obama administration's limited response to journalistic attention was possible.

Résumé

Ce mémoire examine les variations dans les formulations précises utilisées par l'administration Obama et le New York Times lors du processus de légitimation publique des véhicules aériens sans pilote (UAV) armés. Il utilise un cadre théorique qui analyse l'action socialement dense créée par l'interaction entre les pratiques, les connaissances préalables et l'état de la relation symbiotique entre les deux communautés. Cette analyse a été achevée à l'aide du logiciel Atlas.ti afin de faciliter le codage interprétatif et l'analyse des articles du New York Times et les communiqués officiels de l'administration Obama publiés et émis entre janvier 2009 et mai 2013. En examinant ces sources, ce mémoire met en lumière le processus par lequel des constellations particulières d'action socialement dense ont rendu possibles les formulations précises de chaque communauté dans un contexte donné. Cela illustre également comment la définition sociale de la technologie des drones a été élaborée et comment l'administration Obama a pu se limiter à une réaction restreinte devant l'attention portée aux attaques de drones par la presse.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Vincent Pouliot for his persistent support and guidance throughout this process. Without his encouragement to take risks and use new techniques, this thesis would not have achieved the same level of quality and depth of detail. In addition, I am especially grateful for his financial support in purchasing Atlas.ti software to assist with my research. I also wish to thank Mark Brawley and Fernando Nuñez-Mietz for their insightful comments and guidance during the proposal process. Finally, I would like to thank all of my professors at McGill University for their contributions to my training and this work.

Throughout my time in Montréal, I have been fortunate to have had fantastic support through my friends and peers. I am deeply indebted to Michael Faubert for the many hours we spent discussing and exploring ideas for our theses. I also owe many thanks to Jon Depoyster for his consistent availability as a resource and guide in navigating this process. I am also grateful for June McCabe's moral support and friendship. In addition, I want to thank Raphaëlle Mathieu-Bédard, Matt Castle, Alice Chessé, Alejandra Espinosa, Hillary Birch, Colin Chia, Tom Burgess, and all my other friends in Montréal for their support and making my time there so wonderful. Finally, I am thankful for Eric Ellingson's generous help, which facilitated a greater number of useful charts and graphs.

Finally and most importantly, I want to thank my family for their profound and constant support. Without them I would not have been able to complete this project. I am deeply grateful for my parents, Jon and Robyn Anderson, who were always available to talk and offer advice, whether it was about my work or a much-needed distraction. I also want to thank my wonderful sisters, Laura Cochrane and Cate Anderson, and my brother-in-law Greg Cochrane, for being a vital network of support through the high and low points of this process. Without my family's support, this thesis would not have been possible and I am deeply grateful for their help in pushing me to achieve this goal.

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Introduction

In late 2000, the Central Intelligence Agency began flying its first drone missions over Afghanistan.[1] During one flight, the Predator drone watched a convoy of trucks drive into the Tarnak Farms training camp, when a "tall man in long white robes" appeared. Every person watching the feed at the CIA was convinced that that man was Osama Bin Laden.[2] However, due to the six hour lag before Tomahawk cruise missiles could arrive, no launch was approved. One year later, the attacks of September 11, 2001 took place.

Even before those attacks, the CIA had resolved to never face that dilemma again. By mid-February 2001, the first armed missile tests from drones had taken place and within weeks of the September 11 attacks, drones were incinerating vehicles in Afghanistan.[3] Since that period, drones have become a favored tool in the fight against Al Qaeda and have expanded that effort beyond the "hot battlefields" of Afghanistan and Iraq. As of June 27, 2014 there have been a total of 482 strikes in Pakistan and Yemen that have killed up to 3695 militants and 394 civilians.[4] This massive and unprecedented effort against a non-state actor has remained classified and was not even acknowledged officially until 2012.[5] However, given the globally interconnected nature of world communications, it did not stay a secret for long.

In response to growing public attention, the executive branch maintained unyielding secrecy and only spoke indirectly about the program. By the time the Obama administration finally began to openly defend drone warfare, the public had already developed an exceedingly negative perception of the weapon. Even though unmanned weaponry represented a valuable development in military technology, the Obama administration's public legitimation efforts were deeply flawed.

Historically, the executive branch has followed a far more effective process of military technology legitimation. It initially exhibits heavy information control until the technology

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[1]. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are commonly referred to as "drones." While there has been resistance to the term, it has become commonplace. I will use both terms interchangeably, but generally use "drones" for readability.

[2] Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife* (New York: Penguin Press, 2013), 93.

[3] Ibid., 7:95.

[4]This is according to the maximum estimates excluding "unknown" deaths. "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis," *New America Foundation*, February 2010, http://natsec.newamerica.net/drones/pakistan/analysis; "Drone Wars Yemen: Analysis," *New America Foundation*, March 2012, http://natsec.newamerica.net/drones/yemen/analysis.

[5] John Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy" (Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, April 30, 2012).

becomes public, whether by use of the weapon or being revealed by the enemy. Then, the administration initiates a period of legitimation that corresponds to the context. After the atomic bombs dropped, President Harry S. Truman publicly proposed institutional restraints within sixteen hours.[6] Within two weeks of a leak regarding the hydrogen bomb, Truman responded to public concerns by framing his intention to develop the weapon as a Cold War necessity.[7] A decade later, the U-2 spy program was exposed after a plane was shot down over the Soviet Union. Facing divided public opinion and pressure from Khrushchev,[8] the US admitted to espionage, promptly discontinued U-2 usage, and engaged in diplomatic efforts to avoid further confrontation.[9] Framing the incident and intelligence gathering as a "distasteful but vital necessity" of the Cold War facilitated the maintenance of public opinion and future use of the U-2.[10] A few years later, the use of Agent Orange and other defoliants in Vietnam was revealed and officially confirmed within a 4 month period.[11] Rather than mobilizing the public, criticism generated primarily from the scientific community and select members of Congress.[12] The program was discontinued in 1971 after reports of birth defects and stillbirths among those exposed.[13] Agent Orange's notoriety grew years later as veterans complained of health problems.[14] In this case, the government maintained use while concern was minimal, but responded to reports of serious problems with a significant policy change far before public

[6] He called for establishing a commission controlling production and usage of atomic power and making recommendations to Congress for making atomic force an influence towards maintaining world peace. Harry Truman, "Primary Resources: Announcing the Bombing of Hiroshima," *PBS*, accessed September 30, 2013, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/truman-hiroshima/.

[7] Kathleen Johnson, "H-Bomb Development Summary," *Cold War Museum*, n.d., http://www.coldwar.org/articles/40s/h_bomb.asp.

[8] The Soviets had captured the pilot alive with evidence that he had been spying. E. Bruce Geelhoed, "Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Spy Plane, and the Summit: A Quarter-Century Retrospective," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 1987, 99.

[9] Milton Bracker, "Public Is Divided on Effect of U-2: 10-City Check Shows Split on Political Consequences," *New York Times*, May 31, 1960; Dana Adams Schmidt, "Diplomats and the U-2: Some Find U.S. Stand Irresponsible And Inept -- Others Are Less Critical," *New York Times*, May 13, 1960.

[10] Geelhoed, "Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Spy Plane, and the Summit," 102–103.

[11] The program was discovered in December 1965, with official confirmation in March 1966. Wil D. Verwey, *Riot Control Agents and Herbicides in War: Their Humanitarian, Toxicological, Ecological, Military, Polemological, and Legal Aspects* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff International Publishing Company, 1977), 111.

[12] Emanuel Perlmutter, "2 Senate Candidates Attack Defoliant Use in War," *New York Times*, August 17, 1970; Benjamin Welles, "Pentagon Backs Use of Chemicals: To Continue Vietnam Tactics Despite Scientists' Protest," *New York Times*, September 21, 1966; J. B. Neilands, "Vietnam: Progress of the Chemical War," *Asian Survey* 10, no. 3 (March 1970): 223–225.

[13] "On the Agent Orange Trail," *New York Times*, July 5, 1979.

[14] The government was slow to admit guilt but the US Department of Veteran Affairs finally seriously studied the health effects in 1984. David Zierler, *The Invention of Ecocide: Agent Orange, Vietnam, and the Scientists Who Changed the Way We Think about the Environment* (Athens, Ga.; London: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 10–12.

concern increased. These cases are varied but demonstrate effective responses that matched public pressure. In each example the government mobilized to counter public concerns, rather than refusing to confirm whether the military technologies existed.

Given the historical record of comparatively successful legitimation, how was this anomalous result for drones possible? Fundamentally, there were two significant underlying factors that helped set the stage for this outcome. The first element was a considerable move toward secrecy after the attacks of September 11th, 2001. While the end of the Cold War led to a brief relaxation of executive branch secrecy, the aftermath of 9/11 shattered Americans' sense of security and created a powerful incentive to do whatever was necessary to prevent another attack.[15] This led to a substantial increase in secrecy through new classification categories, the "reclassification" of thousands of documents, and the creation of a new Department of Homeland Security.[16] This also strengthened journalistic hesitation to publish information that could harm national security. The second factor that played a significant role in enabling this outcome was the enhanced capacity of journalists to gain reliable access to remote areas of the world. Instantaneous global communication had the effect of seriously weakening the executive branch's monopoly on information control. These two factors were instrumental as background conditions for this outcome. However, they do not offer much insight into *how* the legitimation process unfolded.

This thesis seeks to explore how the Obama administration's particular evolution in responses was possible. Thus, it goes beyond the previous conditions to ask how the specific components of the executive branch's anomalous response were enabled in a given context. This was done by examining the specific framing and interactions of the Obama administration and journalists at the New York Times from January 2009-May 2013. In this process, I uncovered the important role of their symbiotic relationship in influencing government engagement in the "drone legitimation process."

In the initial period, the Obama administration relied on heavily evasive framing and anonymous comments to reporters. This largely consisted of broad statements about the precision and effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts. In response, journalists were largely

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[15] Robert Dover and Michael Goodman, eds., *Spinning Intelligence: Why Intelligence Needs the Media, Why the Media Needs Intelligence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 22–28.

[16] Allan Siegal, "Secrets about Secrets: The Backstage Conversations between Press and Government," *Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy: Working Paper Series*, 2006, 4; Dover and Goodman, *Spinning Intelligence: Why Intelligence Needs the Media, Why the Media Needs Intelligence*, 26.

accepting of those frames. They did not treat drones as a subject of interest and generally framed it through a neutral strategic lens.

In the second portion, framing began to shift due to two key events, a governmental statement that denied civilian casualties during nearly a year and the killing of an American citizen. This led to a significant qualitative shift as journalists began to treat drones as a topic of inquiry and displayed a growing mistrust of the administration's statements. They also started to frame the issue through legal questions and concerns about secrecy itself. In response, the Obama administration continued to dodge questions about the program, but initiated a series of highly legalized speeches at universities. Previous strategic and precision framing continued, but did not offer much new information.

The final section of the case exhibited substantial changes in specific framing as journalists started to exhibit intense concern over the use of drones and the secrecy surrounding the program. Editors at the New York Times began to utilize editorials to rally additional coverage and lambast the abuse of secrecy. By this point, drones were a subject of significant inquiry and journalistic mistrust of executive branch information was rampant. The tone of coverage also became increasingly negative. In response, the executive branch demonstrated a slow but steady shift from evasive to reform-based framing. Administration officials began to admit the limitations of the program and conceded that transparency and reforms were necessary. This culminated in a speech by President Obama, which was accompanied by reforms and the declassification of information.

By mapping the shifts in specific framing used to debate the topic of drone warfare, I sought to uncover the underlying factors which made these different "moves" possible. More specifically, I aimed to address the following questions regarding this case study:

(1) At an analytical level, how does the legitimation process for new weaponry unfold?

(2) How do democratic governments respond to public concerns regarding developments in secret weapons technology?

(3) At an empirical level, how was it possible for the American government to take such an inactive role in the legitimation process of a groundbreaking weapons platform?

(4) Finally, how can their specific "moves" be explained and what made the administration's shift toward transparency possible?

Due to the highly inductive nature of this research, I was able to uncover the importance of the deeply interconnected relationship between the executive branch and journalists in answering these questions. As a result, this thesis will contain a substantial amount of description and analysis of the New York Times' coverage. I do not pretend to be an expert in journalism studies and therefore wish to admit upfront the limitations of that analysis. Nevertheless, I found it was impossible to capture the interactivity and importance of that relationship without offering a substantial discussion of the journalistic community. As a result, the thesis will also seek to illustrate the nature of the symbiotic relationship between national security journalists and the executive branch. It will also examine how it was possible for journalists to exhibit such stark contrasts in specific framing throughout the drone debate.[17] Regardless, the primary aim of this thesis remains focused on the Obama administration's flawed legitimation process. These secondary insights merely serve to paint a richer picture of the nature of that symbiotic relationship and role of journalists in influencing executive branch framing.

In response to the previous research questions, I posit the existence of a constellation of socially thick agency from which communities act in reaction to other communities' framing.[18] This "strategy" flows from their practices, background knowledge and the state of the symbiotic relationship with the other community. While I do not examine the following aspect in great depth due to scope limitations, I posit that the nature of their symbiotic relationship is founded on a practice of democratic public engagement in which both communities play particular roles.[19] Throughout this case, the shifting state of that symbiosis will play a primary explanatory role in enabling and constraining the specific framing of both communities. This is due to the largely static nature of practices and background knowledge during this period. Nevertheless, the symbiotic relationship is fundamentally constituted through the performances and logics of the other aspects of the constellation of socially thick agency. The highly interactive nature of these components means that shifts in symbiosis will have the effect of enabling and restricting the

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[17] In a sense, the nature of the secrecy and absence of overt Obama administration framing in the initial period made the journalistic role in this case even more substantial. Nevertheless, that context is vital for understanding shifts in executive branch framing.

[18] Frédéric Mérand and Amélie Forget, "Strategy," in *Bourdieu in International Relations: Rethinking Key Concepts in IR* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 97.

[19] The Obama administration is held responsible by journalists, who uncover and report information on national security issues. However, the journalists also rely on the administration for access and information. Fundamentally, it is shaped by what it means to act as a democratic government and constitutionally protected press in society. This will be briefly discussed in Chapter One, but is premised upon a notion that it is "practices all the way down."

influence of the other aspects. Thus, the interactions and dynamics of all three factors will be highlighted in order to explain the shifts in specific framing throughout the case.

Throughout history, new technologies have transformed warfare and how states interact. In coming years, the study of International Relations will face challenges in understanding the novel dynamics presented by networked and automated weapons. This thesis makes a contribution through its analysis of a topical policy issue and offers a "first cut" at examining the social dynamics surrounding the weaponization of robotic technologies. In addition, this exploration of the symbiotic relationship's important role in shaping foreign policy discourse offers valuable insights. It illustrates that just as states are influenced by public opinion and the international community, journalists also exhibit a similar capacity. Furthermore, this thesis offers new details on the social dynamics surrounding weapon legitimation and secrecy in an era of instantaneous global media and changing information technology. It also offers a methodological contribution in pushing the field to embrace the capacity for large-N interpretive work using qualitative analysis software. Finally, it makes a contribution to practice theory by investigating "signaling," one of Adler and Pouliot's proposed research areas.[20] In this thesis, I offer a framework of analyzing signaling through specific, malleable frames which flow out of practices and background knowledge in reaction to other political actors. This thesis demonstrates the unique value of practices in understanding social interaction between communities, regardless of whether information is highly classified.

Table 1: An Overview of Dominant Framing and Shifts within the Case

	Obama Administration		New York Times Journalists		State of the Symbiotic Relationship
	Dominant Framing	Dominant Spaces	Dominant Framing	Treatment of Drones	
January 2009-June 2011	Evasion and Ambiguous Strategic/Precision Framing	Anonymous Comments to Journalists	Strategic and Limited Legal Framing	Neutral/Accepting of Administration Framing	Homology
July 2011-April 2012	Continued Evasion and Broad Legal Framing	Official Speeches	Transparency, Legal, and Obama-Focused Framing	Topic of Interest and Reduced Trust in Administration Framing	In Transition
May 2012-May 2013	Diminishing Evasion and new Reform-based Framing	Press Briefings	Continued Transparency, Legal and Obama-Focused Framing	Topic of Concern and Rejection of Administration Framing	Hysteresis

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[20] Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, *International Practices* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 25.

Plan of the Thesis

This thesis unfolds through five chapters. In the first chapter, I begin with an overview of relevant literature for examining the case. Then, I explain key concepts and offer a framework for examining how shifts in specific framing were made possible by a socially thick agency created through a constellation of practices, background knowledge, and state of the communities' symbiotic relationship. Finally, I overview the methodology used for undertaking my research and explain the case study.

Chapter Two applies my theoretical framework to the interactions of New York Times journalists and the Obama administration from January 2009-June 2011. In this period, I argue that the initial constellation of socially thick agency was dominated by a durable homology that characterized the symbiotic relationship. This allowed the Obama administration to exhibit a heavy imbalance toward secrecy over transparency in their practices and background knowledge. At the same time, journalistic dispositions and practices of inquiry and framing were constrained by the inertia of homology.

Chapter Three examines the period from July 2011-April 2012 through the lens of my theoretical framework. This section overviews the process by which the previous chapter's homology broke down and examines the resulting specific framing. I argue that two key events, a denial of civilian casualties during nearly a year and the killing of Anwar al-Awlaki, initiated a process by which the initial homology disintegrated. This pushed journalists to contest their position within the field of the "drone legitimation process." This was done through increased criticality in specific framing and the now-unconstrained practices and background knowledge of inquiry and framing. The Obama administration continued to exhibit a practical imbalance and evasive framing, but reacted to the debate with a move towards legalistic speech-giving.

In Chapter Four, I use the theoretical framework to analyze shifts in specific framing from May 2012-May 2013. In this period, the previous chapter's breakdown of homology flowed into the development of hysteresis. This was characterized by the maladaptation of the Obama administration's dispositions to its new position in the social game. These shifting relative positions were the result of continued journalistic contestation. As a result, the specific framing of journalists increased in criticality due to a momentum-adding effect from perceived hysteresis. This provoked increased reform-based framing from the administration as it finally moved to make a temporary shift towards transparency through President Obama's May 23, 2013 speech.

Chapter Five consists of the thesis' conclusion. In this section I will overview the different arguments made throughout the case study. Finally, I will discuss the theoretical and empirical contributions of this thesis to the field of International Relations and the study of governmental-journalistic interactions, unmanned weaponry, and secrecy.

Chapter One: A Theory of Symbiotic Practices and Framing Contestation

Several minutes went by as the Mitsubishi was framed by the cross-hairs at the center of the video monitor, until a missile blast washed the entire screen white. Seconds later, the picture clarified to show the wreckage of the truck, twisted and burning. Dearlove turned to a group of CIA officers, including Ross Newland, an agency veteran who months earlier had taken a job as part of a group overseeing the Predator program. He cracked a wry smile. "It almost isn't sporting, is it?"
-The Way of the Knife by Mark Mazzetti[1]

In this chapter, I will overview the theoretical framework used throughout the following chapters to explain how and why particular shifts in framing took place. First, I will review relevant literature and introduce the literature on practice theory. Then, I will overview key concepts and propose a framework for examining specific framing in this case. Finally, I will describe the methodology used to complete the research and outline the case study.

Literature Review

Due to the recent timing of the case, there is a limited amount of literature which directly comments on the topic of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). While some fields have begun to discuss the topic, others have not yet engaged it in a significant fashion. Nevertheless, this can be remedied by using an analytical lens focused on the legitimation of new weaponry and how democratic governments respond to public concerns. As such, I will employ this analytical focus to explore viewpoints clustered around three primary perspectives: Efficiency/Strategic Choice, International Institutions/Law, and Normative/Political Values. In the following section, I will overview these viewpoints and their relevance and shortcomings in explaining how it was possible for the Obama administration to make its specific "moves" in the drone legitimation process.

Efficiency/Strategic Choice

This view argues that states make their decisions based on a rational assessment of the options. Appropriating Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow's Model I from *Essence of Decision*, the US should use an ordered process of assessing policy options before making a choice. This perspective examines the "goal the government was pursuing when it acted and how the action was a reasonable choice, given the nation's objective."[2] In the case of unveiling a new military technology, effective continued use of the weapon would be the goal. States must consider not

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[1] Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife*, 7.
[2] Graham T Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (London: Pearson Education, 1971), 15.

only current effectiveness of weapons, but also the effects technological change will bring in the future. [3] Given rising powers and a continued threat from terrorist groups, it would be counterintuitive for the US to act in a way that might restrict their capacity to use classified programs that offer a powerful edge. This would also create a disposition against transparency unless the value of appeasing the public was vital for the present and future use of the technology or program.

Moving to the specific case of UAVs, a decision that could hinder their operation and might reveal sensitive robotics and sensor technology to other states and non-state actors runs counter to Model I. Initial secrecy was a rational strategy, but after the weapon was revealed it would have been rational for the executive branch to follow successful precedent and make a prompt and coordinated effort to legitimate drones to the public. The program has been instrumental in disrupting terrorist networks and a swift response might have prevented the need for potentially restrictive policy changes. The Obama administration's slow and ineffective actions were not a rational choice given its objective.

The data also suggests the value of appeasing public opinion did not outweigh the present and long-term benefit of continued CIA operation of drones. The May 2013 speech did not lead to a significant reduction in strikes and it took less than a week for the first strike in Pakistan after the speech. In total, 30 covert strikes out of 52 total strikes in 2013 took place after the speech.[4] While the trend of overall drone warfare was moving downward, it had already started to do so beforehand. The lack of a significant drop illustrates the continued threat of terrorist networks and the program's effectiveness. While there was strong domestic debate over drones, it is unlikely that it outweighed the utility of the program at the time of the May 23 speech. Overall, this model does not adequately explain the executive branch's inactive role in the legitimation process of UAVs.

International Institutions/International Law

Another viewpoint to consider is the role of institutional and legal constraints. In this case, international organizations and legal bodies would react to covert weapon programs by pursuing information to determine whether they violate existing agreements. After information is revealed, the organizations would react to create any necessary frameworks to regulate or prohibit the

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[3] Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 44–79.

[4] "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis"; "Drone Wars Yemen: Analysis."

weaponry. In order for this perspective to offer explanatory power in this case, the institutions and law must provide an impetus for the US government to make a large speech and policy change. It is also likely that the specific policy changes would reflect and specifically adjust to international law.

Thus far there has been very little coherent action or dialogue by the international community and United Nations. There have only been a few documents addressing the topic, such as UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston's 2010 report questioning the use of targeted strikes.[5] However, it served primarily as an investigation into the topic rather than a definitive call for changes to international law. In late January 2013, UN Special Rapporteur Ben Emmerson announced a new inquiry into the impact of UAVs on civilians, which was released in October 2013.[6] The concerns raised in this report match the complaints of international human rights groups. Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely this announcement or the previous reports prompted shifts in US policy by May 2013. The United States maintained that it abides by all applicable law and without access to classified data, these concerns remain unresolved.

While the legal field is quite developed in terms of publishing on UAV technology and its implications, international law itself is still lacking. One of the first volumes to bring scholars from multiple disciplines to discuss the legal and moral implications of the drone program is *Targeted Killings* edited by Claire Finkelstein, Jens David Ohlin, and Andrew Altman.[7] Within that work, Richard Meyer argues that UAVs fall into a legal no man's land between the laws of war and domestic criminal law.[8] He calls for a sharper and more specific line to be drawn in international law. Further, he proposes the creation of formal declarations of war against non-state organizations and individuals to give the International Court of Justice the corresponding jurisdiction over challenges to any state's designation of a group or individual as a terrorist.[9] Meyer's calls for significant changes to international law indicate a lack of the clarity needed for

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[5] Philip Alston, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions* (New York City: United Nations General Assembly, May 28, 2010), http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/14session/A.HRC.14.24.Add6.pdf.

[6] "UN Launches Inquiry into Drone Killings," *BBC*, January 24, 2013, sec. World, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-21176279.

[7] Claire Oakes Finkelstein, Jens David Ohlin, and Andrew Altman, eds., *Targeted Killings: Law and Morality in an Asymmetrical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[8] Richard V. Meyer, "The Privilege of Belligerency and Formal Declarations of War," in *Targeted Killings: Law and Morality in an Asymmetrical World*, ed. Claire Oakes Finkelstein, Jens David Ohlin, and Andrew Altman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 183–219.

[9] Ibid., 186.

dealing with current issues. The debate over the applicability of international humanitarian law or international human rights law adds to the difficulty of this viewpoint explaining the case.[10] In addition, the policy changes proposed in Obama's speech are aimed at public accountability, but do not indicate any concern with international law. While international institutions and law provide focal points for concerns over drones, they are insufficiently capable of compelling the US to make a major speech and policy shifts.

Political/Normative Values

The perspective of constructivist scholarship points to the influence of norms and identity on state and organizational behavior.[11] This ties into how political values could influence government behavior during the legitimation process. With regards to novel weapons technology, norms specific to the type of killing are another potential part of the decision-making.[12] For this case, it would require domestic and international opposition based not just on the potential for civilian casualties, but on the enterprise of targeted killing itself. In a broader sense, public debate could reinvigorate political values. The removal of secrecy might lead a government to reexamine a weapon which had been previously considered acceptable. In this case, a resurgence of cosmopolitan values might have led the Obama administration to change its perception of UAVs and propose restrictive policy changes.

An examination of assassination norms offers some insights into whether this viewpoint plays a significant role. Ward Thomas' work traces the norm throughout history and argues that the prohibition of assassination often served as a way to reinforce the position of the great powers against other states and non-state actors.[13] However, the norm may be weakening due to a structural change in who states are fighting.[14] The focus on non-state organizations and terrorist networks led to an American preference for "pre-emption." The 2002 National Security Strategy explicitly argued that the US "can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past... we cannot let our enemies strike first."[15] This pressure to preempt played a large role in

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[10] *Drones: Myths and Reality in Pakistan* (International Crisis Group, May 21, 2013), 18–19.

[11] See Wendt 1992; Barnett and Finnemore 2004

[12] These norms exist regarding indiscriminate killing (e.g. chemical weapons) or treacherous methods (e.g. assassination). See Ward Thomas, "Norms and Security: The Case of International Assassination," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000): 105–33; Ward Thomas, "The New Age of Assassination," *SAIS Review* 25, no. 1 (2005): 27–39.

[13] Thomas, "Norms and Security," 107.

[14] Thomas, "The New Age of Assassination," 29.

[15] Ibid., 33.

justifying the expansion of targeted strikes. While the American public grew concerned about the strikes, they were not opposed to their use abroad. A poll taken on May 23-24, 2013 showed 69% of respondents in favor of strikes outside the US, with only 14% against them.[16] Clearly, assassination norms lack the power to explain this case.

Current evidence also suggests that political values lack an explanatory role. As a candidate, Barack Obama defined himself against his opponents through his opposition to the war in Iraq. However, rather than pure pacifism, Obama better exhibits pragmatic liberalism. In a 2002 Chicago speech, he defined his opposition to "dumb" and "rash" wars rather than all wars.[17] In his 2009 speech receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, Obama chose to lay out a framework for the just use of force.[18] These speeches offer an insight into Obama's political values about war, which were reflected in the Obama administration's dramatic increase of the use of drones. In his first year in office, there were three times as many strikes as in President Bush's last three years combined.[19] It appears that Obama's political values did not clash with these increases in the use of lethal force outside war theatres. Indeed, much of the President and his administration's rhetoric framed targeted killings as a just, ethical and legal tactic.[20] The May 23 speech offered a full-throated defense of the justice of UAVs as a tool for targeted actions. Obama emphatically stated that the strikes against Al Qaeda and the Taliban were part of "a just war -- a war waged proportionally, in last resort, and in self-defense."[21] Moving to tangible evidence demonstrates further weaknesses in the political/normative values line of reasoning.

In addition to rhetoric, the actions of the administration through Department of Defense funding and the current use of drones also undermine this viewpoint. The Department of Defense's *Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap FY2011-2036* offers a vision dominated by increased incorporation and development of unmanned systems for aerial, land, and maritime

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[16] Interestingly, 42% were in favor of drone use against US citizens who posed a terrorist threat, with 31% opposed and 27% undecided. Jason Koebler, "Poll: Americans OK With Targeting Citizens Overseas," May 28, 2013, http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/05/28/poll-americans-ok-with-drone-strikes-overseas.

[17] "Transcript: Obama's Speech Against The Iraq War," *NPR.org*, January 20, 2009, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99591469.

[18] "Nobel Lecture by Barack H. Obama," *The Nobel Peace Prize 2009*, December 10, 2009, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2009/obama-lecture_en.html.

[19] Gabriella Blum and Philip Heymann, "Law and Policy of Targeted Killing," *Harvard National Security Journal* 1 (2010): 151.

[20] Greater detail on framing as a concept will be provided in the Theoretical Framework section.

[21] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University" (National Defense University, May 23, 2013).

contexts.[22] Funding for UAVs has consistently increased each year starting in the Bush era, moving from \$284 million in the 2002 fiscal year to \$3.3 billion in 2010. Possessing over 7,500 unmanned aircraft by 2010, the government's interest in unmanned technology is clear.[23] Such a massive investment seems unlikely if the administration's values did not support these tools. This data added to the continued usage of targeted strikes indicates that political values do not adequately explain the administration's decision.[24]

Practice Theory as an Alternative

By examining the case from the perspective of practice theory, this study is able to move past systemic or international legal pressures to offer insights into not only the secrecy surrounding the US drone program, but also the administration's specific framing and eventual decision to make a major policy speech with proposed reforms. This viewpoint also highlights the importance of the symbiotic relationship with journalists. Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot define practices as, "socially meaningful patterns of action which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world."[25] Part of the power of practices derives from their agential and structural character. Through "communities of practice," agents are framed in a way that tells them the socially adequate and recognizable way to act.[26] Essentially, this allows practices to explain how agents "lock in structural meaning in time and space."[27] This offers a process-focused view that will help explain when and why certain events occurred. By uncovering the background knowledge, practices, and symbiotic relationship between the Obama administration and New York Times (NYT) journalists, this study offers insights into how it was possible for each community to react to and frame drones in particular ways throughout the case. During both the initial harmony and final contestation, the communities' framing flowed out of those practices, background knowledge, and their relationship with the other community. In the end, these dynamics produced the drones' highly negative and at times misleading public image.

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[22] "The Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap FY2011-2036" (United States Department of Defense, n.d.), http://info.publicintelligence.net/DoD-UAS-2011-2036.pdf.

[23] Jeremiah Gertler, *U.S. Unmanned Aerial Systems* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 3, 2012), 2–3, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42136.pdf.

[24] As described in the section on Effective/Strategic Choice.

[25] Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*, 6.

[26] A community of practice is "a configuration of a domain of knowledge that constitutes like-mindedness, a community of people that 'creates the social fabric of learning,' and a shared practice that embodies 'the knowledge the community develops, shares, and maintains.'" Ibid., 17.

[27] Ibid., 15.

In this case, I contend that the Obama administration's conduct during the legitimation process was constituted by a durable imbalance between practices of secrecy and transparency that interfered with its symbiotic relationship with journalists.[28] Initially, the executive branch's deeply entrenched bureaucratic disposition toward secrecy allowed it to control the terms of the debate and avoid sharing information about drones. However, when events finally caused journalists to question governmental framing and begin investigating drones, the administration's response was highly constrained.[29] The executive branch's framing could have assuaged public concerns through data on accuracy, discrimination, and the niche use of UAV technology.[30] However, instead of actively publicizing information to legitimate the weapon, practices of secrecy continued to outweigh transparency.

As a result, fears of human rights violations and domestic armed drone usage led to a misleading debate and negative public definition of drones. I argue that the government's deeply embedded practice led to a rigidity and inability to properly adapt to a changing field. This effect was exacerbated by new instantaneous global reporting channels that increased journalists' capacity to react with greater speed and flexibility.[31] While the executive branch initially held a monopoly on informational capital about the drone program, it increasingly lost this advantage. Eventually, pressure from journalistic concerns reached a critical mass that prompted a substantive response. President Obama's speech and reforms on May 23, 2013 represented an effort to make up its loss of symbolic power and salvage its position in the social game.

Overview of Practical Foundations

Throughout this case, the context and nature of the relationship between journalists and the Obama administration will play a central role. I posit that a foundational logic rooted in the roles of the executive branch and journalists in a democracy underwrites the practices and background knowledge of both communities. Within the United States, relatively open access to

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[28] These terms will be more explicitly defined in the theoretical framework section.

[29] This lagging response is called "hysteresis" and will be further explained during the following section. At times, I will use the term "governmental" to describe the Obama administration. This is not intended to include the legislative or judicial branches of the US government, but is an aesthetic choice to streamline writing. I primarily focus on individual actors who reside near the top of the executive branch and its bureaucracies.

[30] UAVs are slow, loud, and easy targets for air defense systems. They are mostly valuable against asymmetrical targets. Nevertheless, the debate at this time essentially painted them as a "wonder-weapon."

[31] While focusing on technological innovations in information technology is beyond the scope of this thesis, they play an important role in facilitating journalists' access to information from distant and dangerous areas.

government information is considered an essential part of the democratic political process.[32] Elected officials are responsible to their constituents and information- sharing on policy is part of that role. In situations where secrecy is abused, the protections enshrined in the First Amendment allow journalists to act as a check against government power. This symbiotic dynamic and a presumed respect for that relationship are deeply engrained in American society.[33]

On the other side, the executive privilege of secrecy also has a long history which can be traced back to Thomas Jefferson and repeated Supreme Court decisions.[34] This need for secrecy in particular situations has long been respected by journalists who agree to withhold stories that could harm national security. While this is generally handled on a case by case basis, it can also take a more organized form. After the attacks of September 11, journalists and government officials created an informal forum called "the Dialogue," looking to establish "best practices" for handling and publishing sensitive information.[35] This logic of how journalists and the executive branch should interact within a democratic polity shapes the underlying context and expectations of each community. It also influences perceptions of competency in maintaining their relationship. While a deeper exploration of these concepts remains beyond the scope of this thesis, this logic of democratic public engagement will shape both communities through concepts explained in the following section.

Overview of Key Concepts

At its core, this case examines the social game occurring in the "field" of the drone legitimation process. In the beginning of this process, the executive branch resides in a superior position due to its symbolic power as the primary arbiter of military and foreign affairs. This is reinforced by its monopoly on the possession of "informational capital" about drones. Throughout the case, the communities will employ frames to characterize and contest drone technology as a social object.[36] In the beginning, the dispositions that comprise each community's habitus will remain compatible with their relative positions.[37] The symbiotic nature

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[32] Mary-Rose Papandrea, "Lapdogs, Watchdogs, and Scapegoats: The Press and National Security Information," *Indiana Law Journal* 83, no. 1 (February 27, 2008): 238.

[33] This does not mean there have not been periods of formal and informal censorship. Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just, eds., *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government, and the Public* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 31–32.

[34] Papandrea, "Lapdogs, Watchdogs, and Scapegoats: The Press and National Security Information," 238–239.

[35] Siegal, "Secrets about Secrets: The Backstage Conversations between Press and Government," 20.

[36] These frames flow from dispositions and the habitus. This will be explained in greater detail below.

[37] Habitus is a "system of durable, transposable dispositions, which integrates past experiences and functions at every moment as a matrix of perception, appreciation and action." Iver Neumann and Vincent Pouliot, "Untimely

of the communities' relationship will strengthen this "homology" and increase its durability.[38] Under homology, "the practical sense becomes a self-regulating mechanism whereby inclinations are aligned with the structure of positions and the rules of the game."[39] This compatibility can create an inertia that interferes with engagement in the social game.[40] It may also prevent adequate assessment of the other community's competency or interfere with reactions to external events. Due to its non-contested state, this inertia becomes self-reinforcing. As a result, it will take a particularly egregious performance and exogenous event to dissolve it. This will result in increased engagement and contestation of positions within the social game.

In response to dissolving homology and shifting positions within the field, communities must react so that their habitus corresponds to the novel situation. If one group is unable to adequately adapt, the other community will begin to view this lag in performance as incompetent. In contrast to homology's inertia, this will create a "mismatch between the dispositions agents embody and the positions they occupy in a given social configuration," known as "hysteresis."[41] This assessment derives from the perspective of the community, rather than from a "god's eye" view.[42] As long as this mismatch is not remedied, the community will view their performance as out-of-sync and incompetent. Due to the symbiotic nature of this relationship, this will lead to increased contestation as the executive branch's response to concerns is deemed insufficient.

Framework of Symbiotic Practices and Framing Contestation

In this section, I offer a framework for explaining how each community's framing is possible. The model relies on a constellation of four total "explanans" that combine to enable specific framing, or the "explanandum."[43] These concepts are used rather than independent or dependent variables in order to capture the complexity of this endogenous and socially

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Russia: Hysteresis in Russian-Western Relations over the Past Millennium," *Security Studies* 20, no. 1 (2011): 109–111.

[38] The nature of the relationship will be discussed in the following section. The strength and durability of this inertia derive in large part due to secrecy's capacity to prevent journalists from adequately assessing the government's competency in performing democratic public engagement.

[39] Neumann and Pouliot, "Untimely Russia: Hysteresis in Russian-Western Relations over the Past Millennium," 111.

[40] Although, Chapter 2 will illustrates that particular aspects of journalistic background knowledge also contributed to this effect.

[41] Neumann and Pouliot, "Untimely Russia: Hysteresis in Russian-Western Relations over the Past Millennium," 109.

[42] Ibid., 111.

[43] Explanan is the determinant and explanandum the subject of explanation. Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*, 18–19.

interconnected phenomenon. [44] Fundamentally, this model relies on Adler and Pouliot's conception of symbiotic practices. In this relationship, practices remain distinct but form part of a coherent and mutually reinforcing whole.[45] The two communities' practices form a symbiosis that embodies the aforementioned foundational process of democratic public engagement. I argue that the state of this symbiotic relationship functions as the primary explanans. This is where homology and hysteresis shape specific framing through the expression of the following subordinate components. The practices and background knowledge that constitute the symbiotic relationship represent the two secondary explanans in this case. The brief time period of this study means they will remain relatively static.[46] Nevertheless, they influence the legitimation process by enabling and constraining particular framing in different contexts. Through these three elements in the constellation, a socially thick agency or "strategy" is formed.[47] By mapping shifts in framing, it is possible to determine how a community's "sense of the game" made specific framing possible.[48]

Figure 1: Framework of Symbiotic Practices and Framing Contestation

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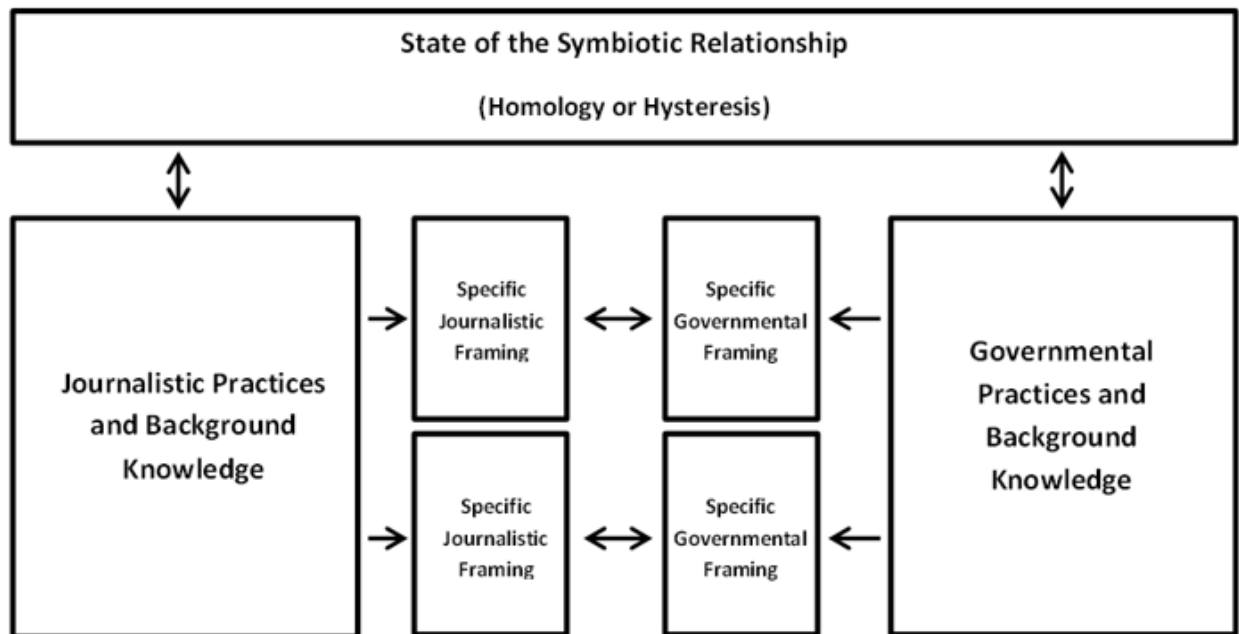
[44] This is tied to the conception of causality employed by this study, which will be further described in the Methodology section.

[45] Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*, 20.

[46] While they are never truly static due to their social nature, they will not exhibit large-scale shifts in this case.

[47] Mérand and Forget, "Strategy," 97.

[48] This is similar to Bourdieu's discussion of the "infinity of moves" made possible within a game of chess, which contains its own rules. Pierre Lamaison and Pierre Bourdieu, "From Rules to Strategies: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu," *Cultural Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (February 1986): 113.

The final tertiary component that helps explain how particular frames are made possible is reactivity to the other community's framing. While the state of the symbiotic relationship, background knowledge, and practices are all durable, reactive framing through socially thick agency is more malleable. It continues to be constrained and enabled by the previous factors, but allows the communities to react specifically to particular frames or exogenous events.[49] By zooming in on framing interactions throughout the case, I will be able use this framework to map changes in the explanandum in order to induce the underlying constellation of explanans.

While the literature on framing is well developed, I hope to move beyond conceptions of framing as "an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction," or "select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating context."[50] These conceptions do not capture the deeply social nature of framing that flows from background knowledge and practices. While I will not endeavor to explore the micro-processes of frame formation due to scope limitations, I utilize an alternative conception. I argue that framing represents the output of a socially thick agency or strategy taking the form of a, "more or less conscious pattern of trying to reproduce [or improve] one's position in a social field."[51] Nevertheless, while framing itself is a practice, I zoom in to examine specific frames. This will capture greater reactivity and detail during this brief case study.

Methodology

Due to the secretive nature of this subject, accessing the necessary practitioners and documents is not currently feasible. Instead, I focus on analyzing the public discourse of the Obama administration and New York Times journalists covering the drone program.[52] Inspired by Krebs and Jackson's model of rhetorical coercion,[53] I examine framing as informed by underlying practices and background knowledge. Ideally, opposing actors utilize specific framing, "to leave their opponents without access to the rhetorical materials needed to craft a

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[49] This fourth component will be expressed through specific framing itself; therefore my study will focus on the other three components.

[50] Robert Benford and Davide Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 614; Robert Entman, "Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52. See also de Vreese 2005 and Tuchman 1978

[51] I thank Lau Blaxekjær for highlighting this conceptual definition. Mérand and Forget, "Strategy," 97.

[52] The New York Times was selected for being, "*the* professional setter of standards, just as Harvard University is perceived as the standard setter of university performance." Gans 2004, 180

[53] Ronald R. Krebs and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, "Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms: The Power of Political Rhetoric," *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 43–48.

socially sustainable rebuttal."[54] Adapting this concept to the social game of drone legitimation offers a way to examine how specific framing was used to contest and limit the other community's capacity to respond. Using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software, I analyzed and coded all Obama administration speeches, press briefings, Google+ Interviews, and comments featured in the NYT that discussed drones or targeted killing.[55] For the journalistic community, I used LexisNexis to collect every article in the New York Times from January 2009-May 2013 featuring the word "drone."[56] These sources were buttressed with coverage of internal administration debates, human rights reports, and independent drone-tracking projects.

This thesis argues that shifts in framing are the result of a socially thick agency created by a constellation of practices, background knowledge, and the state of the symbiotic relationship between communities. In order to uncover the arrangement of explanans that makes specific framing possible at a particular time, I adapted Vincent Pouliot's "sobjectivism" to develop a three-step methodology.[57] The first step involved identifying and recovering subjective meanings through shifts in the primary characteristics of specific framing. Given the malleable and reactive nature of frames, I avoided extrapolating great amounts from single articles. Instead, I looked for changes in following characteristics:

I. The content or themes within the frame being performed
II. A new pattern, disappearance, or relative prevalence of a particular frame.
III. The methods or spaces in which a frame is employed.
IV. The informational capital used to support a specific frame.

As these characteristics changed, I was able to track the process by which drone legitimation unfolded. Importantly, a change in one characteristic did not necessarily signal a significant variation in specific framing. Instead, a sustained variation in one or more characteristics better served to indicate the manifestation of a change in specific framing flowing from the community's "sense of the game." Nevertheless, identifying where these changes occurred was vital for the following step and identifying how the change was made possible.

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[54] Ibid., 36.

[55] In total this was 39 separate sources plus many quotations featured in NYT articles. Questions and statements by journalists within press briefings were also used. See Appendix C

[56] This included 1489 online and print articles. I applied subject filters to remove off-topic articles. See Appendix C

[57] I also thank Jonathan Depoyster for his help in developing this methodology. Vincent Pouliot, "'Sobjectivism': Toward a Constructivist Methodology," *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2007): 359–84; Jonathan Depoyster, "Al-Qaeda and the American Counterterrorism Community: Shifting Practices, 1991-2013," *McGill University M.A. Thesis*, June 2013.

The second step focused on exposing the constellation of background knowledge, practices, and the state of the symbiotic relationship that informed the practitioners within each community of practice. This stage required an interpretive focus while examining source material. By removing the knowledge from its subjective context, I objectified it through interpretation to place it into a greater intersubjective context.[58] Due to my lack of access to the practitioners themselves, I inferred the nature of this socially thick agency in a manner similar to Patrick Thaddeus Jackson's notion of "textual ethnography."[59] By reading and analyzing every text, I used Atlas.ti to take "field notes" through coding and a separate journal.[60] Rather than merely focusing on content, my interpretive coding sought to infer the taken-for-granted knowledge underlying and informing the material. Documents were coded based upon the author's viewpoint, tone, vocabulary, and the use of repetitive themes or ideas that originate in particular perspectives of the world. This allowed me to analyze not just what the subjects talk *about*, but more importantly what they talk *from*.[61] This software allowed me to map and measure these changes to infer the practices, logics, and shifts in symbiosis that enabled and constrained particular framing throughout the time period. Through these two steps, I was able to uncover the underlying explanans that act as critical mechanisms in this case.

The final step of the process historicized the explanans exposed in the previous section. This was inspired by George and Bennett's process tracing methodology with an interpretivist twist suggested by Vincent Pouliot. In this project, I utilized an expanded notion of causality considering "constitutive mechanisms" and employed a postfoundationalist view that those mechanisms serve better as heuristics rather than mechanisms in the positivist sense.[62] In addition, I focused on a notion of local, interpretive causality offered by Pouliot in his chapter on "Practice Tracing." By examining local social processes that illuminated this case study, I hope to offer cross-case analytical generality.[63] In order to complete this step, I used a separate, chronological record of events and statements as a timeline for comparison with my findings. Then, through the technique of historicization, I captured how practices, background knowledge

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[58] Pouliot, "'Sobjectivism,'" 370.
[59] Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, "Making Sense of Making Sense: Configurational Analysis and the Double Hermeneutic," in *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*, ed. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 273.
[60] See Appendix A for the resulting figures and Appendix B for a Coding Dictionary.
[61] From a forthcoming chapter. Vincent Pouliot, "Practice Tracing," 2013, 13.
[62] Pouliot, "'Sobjectivism,'" 372–373.
[63] Pouliot, "Practice Tracing," 20.

and the state of the symbiotic relationship acted in movement to inform specific framing and legitimation process of my case study. By aligning my findings with the shifts in specific framing for both communities, I was able to test the extent to which this constellation and socially thick agency enabled and constrained framing at particular junctures. The use of Atlas.ti software facilitated and standardized this process to add increased rigor to my findings. Through this three-step methodology, I was able to offer insights into the social construction of the public definition of drones and how it was possible for the communities to respond as they did.

The Case of the Obama Administration and New York Times Journalists

In this thesis, I will illustrate how the specific framing of the Obama administration and NYT journalists evolved from January 2009 to the end of May 2013. While I am studying a single case which occupies a particularly short time span, it offers a powerful opportunity to engage in a deep examination of the process by which practices and background knowledge shape framing. This fits into Adler and Pouliot's research agenda for practice theory by examining "signaling" and how information is used to contest social meaning.[64] In addition, the case provides insights into the media/governmental relationship within a democratic context. It acts as a first cut into examining this symbiotic relationship and could serve as a foundation for analytical generalizations from which longer term studies might examine the effects of changes in practices or background knowledge on this relationship or others.

At the beginning of this case, homology characterized the symbiotic relationship and the classified drone program was not significantly examined by journalists. Information on drones was highly controlled with little recourse for verification.[65] This homology and information control prevented significant shifts in framing and coverage during the Obama administration's escalation of drone warfare in 2010. However, homology began to dissolve due to an overreaching frame and the first drone strike of an American citizen in summer of 2011.[66] This shift in the constellation informing journalists provoked new specific framing and information

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[64] Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*, 25.

[65] In fact, the government even clamped down existing access for journalists after an article published too much information in 2009. Tara McKelvey, "Media Coverage of the Drone Program," *Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy*, Discussion Paper Series, February 2013, 12.

[66] Chris Woods, "US Claims of 'No Civilian Deaths' Are Untrue," *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, July 18, 2011; Mark Mazzetti, Charlie Savage, and Scott Shane, "A U.S. Citizen, in America's Cross Hairs," *New York Times*, March 10, 2013.

contestation.[67] It is at this point that the executive branch's dispositions and practices of secrecy started to constrain its ability to respond to journalistic contestation of positions in the field.[68]

After many months of limited shifts in framing, senior administration official John Brennan finally admitted to the use of targeted drone strikes outside of Iraq and Afghanistan in an April 30, 2012 speech.[69] By this point, the state of the symbiotic relationship was shifting to hysteresis and more critical framing arose due to changing relative positions in the social game. The leaking of a Department of Justice "white paper" in February 2013 fueled critical framing and emphasized the extent to which hysteresis had grown.[70] The administration's inability to adequately respond largely continued, but it made incremental shifts before finally offering policy reforms and a speech by President Obama. This increased transparency, albeit largely temporary, helped push the relationship back out of hysteresis toward a more balanced symbiosis.

Figure 2: The Evolving Tone of Drone Coverage in New York Times Articles
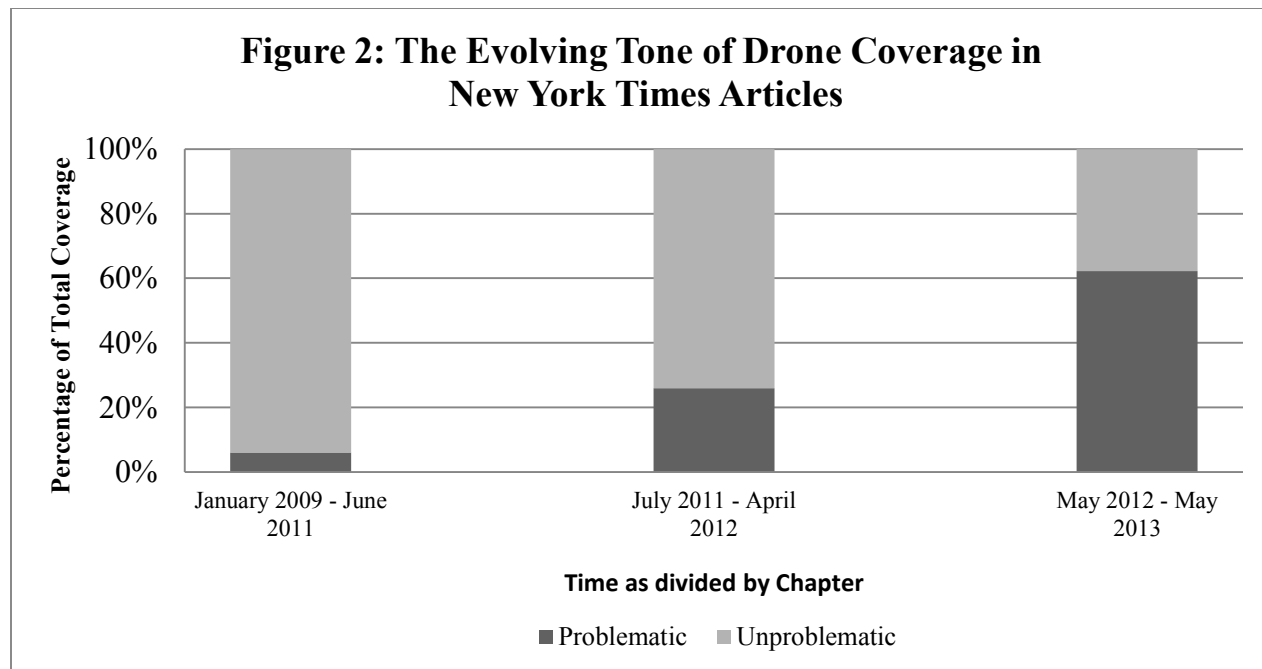
The previously discussed shifts illustrate how the constellation of practices, background knowledge, and the state of the symbiotic relationship combined to enable and restrict specific framing. The extent to which the tone and amount of attention paid to the drone program changed throughout this brief period is striking. Figure 2 illustrates the amount that specific

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[67] Journalists began to question governmental sources and use independent drone-tracking projects and academic experts to balance coverage.
[68] Media coverage of internal debates illustrated the difficulty of addressing journalistic concerns. Daniel Klaidman, "Obama Team to Break Silence on Al-Awlaki Killing," *Newsweek Magazine*, January 23, 2012.
[69] Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."
[70] This was also illustrated through Senator Rand Paul's 13 hour filibuster focused on domestic drone strikes.

framing shifted via coding that captured whether journalists framed drone warfare as an overall positive/neutral or as a negative.[71] Problematic coverage framed drones as ineffective or counterproductive, while Unproblematic coverage was characterized by a more indifferent stance. These codes were employed a maximum of once per article and aimed to capture whether the article in sum tended toward one or the other. The trend in shifting tone will be further illustrated through various aspects of specific framing throughout the thesis.

Figure 3: New York Times Coverage Compared to the Actual Use of Drone Warfare
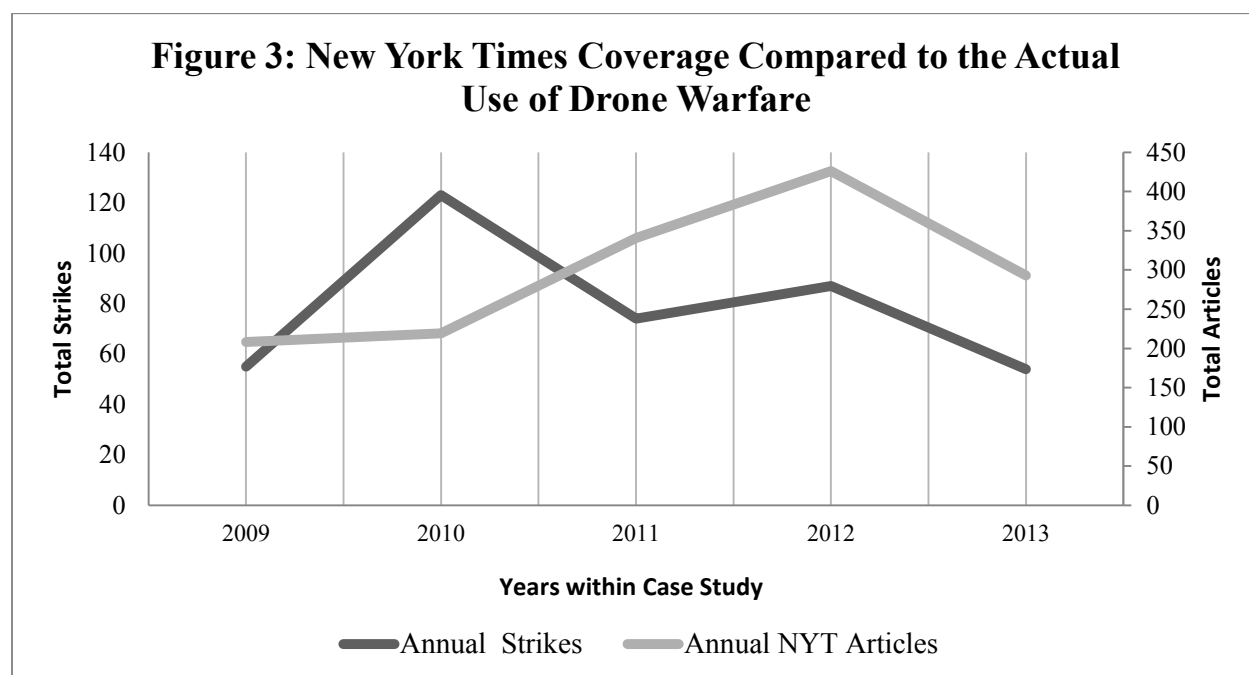
Another illustration of the previously discussed case appears through Figure 3.[72] This demonstrates the substantial lag in coverage which characterizes Chapter Two. Even as annual drone strikes increased from 54 to 122 in the period from 2008-2010, journalistic coverage remained highly stagnant.[73] This illustrates the effects of homology, which shaped possible framing during that period. In addition, those lagging quantitative increases do not capture the even greater delay before drones become a subject of inquiry. This point will be illustrated through the latter chapters analyzing the case. Through the following analysis, the capacity for the constellation and its resulting socially thick agency to affect specific framing and the path of the drone legitimation process will be tested.

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[71] More specific descriptions of all codes used in charts and graphs are featured in Appendix B

[72] This only includes articles until the end of May 2013. Nevertheless, the amount of articles is nearly 300 by that point.

[73] Figure 3's annual strike numbers were also derived from this source. "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis"; "Drone Wars Yemen: Analysis."

Chapter Two: The Calm Before the Storm
January 2009 - June 2011

> The Jonas Brothers are here. (Applause.) They're out there somewhere. Sasha and Malia are huge fans. But, boys, don't get any ideas. (Laughter.) I have two words for you -- Predator drones. (Laughter.) You will never see it coming. (Laughter.) You think I'm joking. (Laughter.)
>
> -President Barack Obama[1]

In this chapter I will overview how the initial constellations of practices, background knowledge, and the state of the symbiotic relationship made it possible for drone use to remain relatively unexamined. First, I will outline New York Times (NYT) journalists' practices of inquiry and specific framing during this period. Then, I will examine the Obama administration's practices of secrecy and transparency followed by their specific framing. Finally, I will explain how background knowledge and the strong homology at this time made these performances and framing possible during an unprecedented escalation in drone warfare.

Overview of Key Events

As President Barack Obama entered office, he carried a public expectation of bringing change to American foreign policy. In the campaign, he had been cast as an "anti-war" candidate due to his opposition to the Iraq War.[2] This overshadowed his more nuanced view which did not oppose war writ large, but called for refocusing on "Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the Taliban is resurgent and Al Qaeda has a safe haven."[3] In fact, within three days of taking office, those who shouted for "Change You Can Believe In" may have wished they had been more specific.

The Obama administration embraced and significantly expanded the use of non-theatre drone strikes.[4] Armed drone use outside Afghanistan had remained rare until the end of President Bush's term, when it abruptly increased to a peak of 36 strikes. In Obama's first year that number increased to 52 before more than doubling to 122 strikes in 2010.[5] The program became

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[1] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at White House Correspondents Association Dinner" (Washington D.C., May 2, 2010).

[2] Especially in contrast to his two primary opponents Hillary Clinton and John Edwards, who had both voted for the war. Barack Obama, "Turning the Page in Iraq" (Clinton, Iowa, September 12, 2007), http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=77011;; Patrick Healy, "Clinton Gives War Critics New Answer on '02 Vote," *New York Times*, February 18, 2007.

[3] Barack Obama, "My Plan for Iraq," *New York Times*, July 14, 2008, sec. Opinion.

[4] With three times as many strikes in his first year as President Bush's last three years combined. Also, when referring to non-theatre use, I am discussing use outside of Iraq and Afghanistan although the Authorization for Use of Military Force does little to establish a limited "theatre."

[5] With a comparatively high estimated civilian casualty rate of roughly 40%. Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife*; "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis."

a valuable component of Obama's counterterrorism strategy and quickly produced results.[6] Within eighteen months, 20 of the top 30 Al Qaeda members had been killed by drones and other covert operations.[7] Given the program's strategic success and the periodic touted killing of high value targets, journalists did cover the strikes. However, they primarily reported their occurrence without investigating the topic itself.

There were opportunities where further scrutiny would have been merited. By the end of 2009, President Obama announced his reformulation of strategy with the "Afghan Surge."[8] His speech openly expressed the importance of strong support for Pakistan's government. In addition, Obama declared that the United States could not "tolerate a safe haven for terrorists whose location is known and whose intentions are clear."[9] A refuge in Pakistan could substantially undermine Afghan war efforts and drone warfare provided an unmentioned solution.

This speech was followed by a series of terror attacks from Al Qaeda and its affiliates. On Christmas Day in 2009, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab nearly exploded an airliner above Detroit. It was the first serious breach of domestic security during Obama's Presidency.[10] Five days later, a suicide bombing in Khost Province, Afghanistan caused seven CIA casualties, the largest single amount since the 1983 Beirut embassy bombing.[11] The US responded with a significant increase in the pace of drone strikes.[12] By January 20, 2010, there had already been 12 strikes in Pakistan, compared to a total of 54 in 2009.[13] Nevertheless, this pace and the doubling of strikes did not provoke a substantial change in the tone and nature of coverage.

In early April 2010, an unprecedented event provided another opportunity for greater attention. The Obama administration had authorized the killing of US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki.[14]

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[6] The reasons for these increases likely reside in the realm of strategic necessity in addressing a diffuse non-state enemy and Obama's pivot to Afghanistan. However, for my purposes, it is more important that the increase occurred and the media did not significantly react.

[7] Mark Landler and Helen Cooper, "Obama Will Speed Military Pullout From Afghan War," *New York Times*, June 23, 2011; Scott Shane, "Qaeda Names Chief and U.S. Hits at Flaws," *New York Times*, June 17, 2011; Mark Mazzetti, "C.I.A. Drone Is Said to Kill Qaeda's No. 2," *New York Times*, August 28, 2011.

[8] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan" (United States Military Academy at West Point, December 1, 2009).

[9] Ibid.

[10] "The System Failed," *New York Times*, December 30, 2009.

[11] Alissa Rubin and Mark Mazzetti, "8 Americans, Most With C.I.A., Reported Killed in Afghan Blast," *New York Times*, December 31, 2009; Kim Sengupta, "Suicide Attack Inflicts Worst Death Toll on CIA in 25 Years," *The Independent*, January 1, 2010.

[12] "Pakistan: Suspected Drone Strike Kills 5," *New York Times*, January 20, 2010; Scott Shane and Eric Schmitt, "C.I.A. Deaths Prompt Surge In Drone War," *New York Times*, January 23, 2010.

[13] This figure includes Bush's two strikes before Obama took office. "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis."

[14] Scott Shane, "U.S. Approves Targeted Killing of American Cleric," *New York Times*, April 6, 2010.

Journalists raised hypotheticals and legal questions, but the news cycle quickly moved on. Another potential focal point appeared in an attempted car bombing in Times Square in May 2010, when drone strikes were cited as the motivation of would-be terrorist Faisal Shahzad.[15] This also led to brief concerns about drones radicalizing populations, but did not change the general trend. Even the tenuous legal argument for drone use in Libya after the expiration of the War Powers Resolution did not expand into a greater legal analysis of non-theatre use.[16]

Interestingly, a slight qualitative change arose in early 2011 due to non-drone related events. Pakistani-American relations began to unravel after the killing of three Pakistani soldiers by manned helicopters in September 2010.[17] This effect was amplified by the conflict over Raymond Davis, a CIA contractor arrested for murder. His eventual release enraged the Pakistani population and served as a symbol of American arrogance.[18] In addition, a deadly drone strike on March 17, 2011 killed 45 individuals, 38 of whom are argued to be noncombatants.[19] The tipping point was the raid that killed Osama Bin Laden. The Pakistanis were furious and embarrassed by the cross-border operation.[20] Coverage began to discuss Pakistani sovereignty in greater detail, but drone warfare's relatively minor role in the controversies meant it was only mentioned in passing.

At the same time, the US capitalized on Al Qaeda's loss with increased strikes. While this period's strikes almost exclusively occurred in Pakistan, the focus expanded to Yemen on May 5, 2011. The first strike there since 2002 was intended for US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki, but the aftermath of the successful Bin Laden raid largely overshadowed this change.[21] In addition, June 25 2011 marked the first known strike in Somalia.[22] Nevertheless, the overall trend in

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[15] Robert Wright, "Exclusive Online Commentary from the Times: The Making of a Terrorist," *New York Times*, May 16, 2010.

[16] Jennifer Steinhauer, "House Rebukes Obama for Continuing Libyan Mission Without Its Consent," *New York Times*, June 4, 2011.

[17] Jane Perlez and Helen Cooper, "Pakistani Deaths in U.S. Airstrike Strain Relations," *New York Times*, October 1, 2010.

[18] Mark Mazzetti et al., "American Held in Pakistan Worked With C.I.A.," *New York Times*, February 22, 2011.

[19] US officials strongly contested their civilian status at the time. "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis."

[20] Interestingly, this lessened pressure somewhat as journalists saw it as proof of Pakistan's untrustworthiness and incompetence. "Pakistan After Bin Laden: The Killing Shows Why the U.S. Can't Trust Pakistan, and Why It Can't Just Walk Away," *New York Times*, May 14, 2011; Scott Shane, "As Rift Deepens, Kerry Has a Warning for Pakistan," *New York Times*, May 15, 2011.

[21] Mark Mazzetti, "American Drone Strike in Yemen Was Aimed at Awlaki," *New York Times*, May 7, 2011.

[22] Ibid.; "Tracking America's Drone War," *The Washington Post*, n.d., http://apps.washingtonpost.com/foreign/drones/.

strikes went downward in 2011 from 2010.[23] Throughout this entire period and its many opportunities to shift coverage, very little attention was paid to the covert war being waged with drones.

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Predominant Practices and Specific Framing

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This section will outline practices of each community and the specific framing that flows from those practices. This will serve to present the "moves" which originated in socially thick agency which moves beyond rational calculation or deeply structural culture.[24] At the core of these communities' practices is the symbiotic relationship formed through their performances. However, that will be explored in a later section. This section hopes to establish the existing constellation and serve as a baseline for comparison in future chapters.

Journalistic Practices of Inquiry and Framing

The foundations of these practices are rooted in the primary facets of what it is to *do* journalism: the process of uncovering information and framing it for the public. There is meaning in which subjects are investigated as well as how they are presented. Performance of journalistic inquiry on the national security "beat" focuses on uncovering secret information and critically analyzing it on behalf of the public.[25] Competent performance of inquiry is rewarded through awards like the Pulitzer Prize. By acting as a "watchdog," journalists have uncovered stories such as the Pentagon Papers, Watergate Scandal, warrantless NSA eavesdropping, and CIA detention sites.[26] This practice of investigation is deeply entrenched in journalists and can lead to greater inquiry if the executive branch attempts to quash a story, such as in the Watergate Scandal.[27] This insatiable pursuit of information is a fundamental practice of journalism.

Within national security journalism, however, there is a unique balance that does not play as large of a role in other beats. While all journalists engage in inquiry to uncover stories and frame them for the public, these journalists often withhold stories on account of their potential damage to national security. This is a result of the symbiotic interaction between practices which causes publishing unnecessary and damaging information to be considered incompetent. The complexity and interdependence of the journalistic-governmental relationship has created a long

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[23] "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis"; "Drone Wars Yemen: Analysis."

[24] Mérand and Forget, "Strategy," 95–96.

[25] This is tied into the discussion of the foundations of the symbiotic relationship and democratic public engagement. This logic will be further explained in the section on background knowledge.

[26] Siegal, "Secrets about Secrets: The Backstage Conversations between Press and Government," 2.

[27] Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 252.

history of self-censorship to protect national interests and maintain access to valuable governmental sources.[28] This balance within journalistic practices often shaped the specific framing employed in this period.

The second facet of journalistic practice is presenting information to the public. This is generally a subtle form of framing that does not directly question a politician, but instead plays-up, neglects, or juxtaposes their positions.[29] The overtness of framing varies depending upon whether the journalist is using an editorial, op-ed, general reporting, or making an editorial decision regarding outside contributions. Each of these methods presents different limitations and roles, such as advocacy journalism generally being limited to editorials and op-eds.[30] An additional factor that shapes public framing is journalists' disinterest or "boredom" with repeating stories that make the same point without new information.[31] This component of journalistic practice plays an important role in this case as stories that engage slightly more directly with drone warfare will appear, but quickly fade due to the lack of information on the program. Given these two primary facets of journalistic practice, I will now zoom in to present the specific framing used throughout this period.

Specific Framing of Journalists

Use of Governmental and External Sources

The first aspect of specific framing I examined was whether diverse perspectives were offered or if one source was presented as sufficient.[32] By citing alternative sources, journalists could subtly contextualize reporting or undermine positions.[33] However, this period exhibited very little use of that technique. Instead, due to the nature of their beat, national security journalists relied on and utilized the executive branch's "officially sanctioned information" to aid reporting.[34] The New York Times often obtained those quotes and background on stories while asking officials about "the potential risks of publication of sensitive information that touches

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[28] Ibid., 271.

[29] Claes de Vreese, "New Avenues for Framing Research," *American Behavioral Scientist* 56, no. 3 (2012): 367.

[30] Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch, eds., *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 373.

[31] Although when stories interest journalists, this "taboo" diminishes. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*, 169.

[32] All sub-sections of specific framing were arrived at inductively through analysis of the source materials.

[33] De Vreese 2012, 367

[34] Brigitte Nacos, Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, and Robert Shapiro, *Selling Fear: Counterterrorism, the Media, and Public Opinion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 187.

ongoing intelligence operations."[35] Generally, editors and journalists considered those off-the record conversations to be, "where the reality and authenticity are to be found."[36] As a result, this period was marked by a general trust and acceptance of anonymous administration commentary. Figure 4 illustrates this trend as articles regularly cited unnamed officials. [37] Journalistic acceptance of administration framing was also visible in an October 10, 2010 editorial that questioned the program's legality, but almost immediately cited officials' arguments that drones have been effective in killing over 400 Al Qaeda militants and fewer than 10 noncombatants.[38] That extraordinary precision was not debated and was presented as reliable.

In this period, journalists rarely employed alternative information sources as a framing method. This is visible in Figure 5 which features non-administration sources. It highlights how academics were referenced during the early 2010 increase in strikes and independent drone-tracking projects cited in late 2010 as Pakistani-US relations deteriorated and the number of strikes was cited as a contributing factor.[39] Nevertheless, these counts remain comparatively low. The acceptance of executive branch data also appeared through a contributed article by the New America Foundation. While their research found a civilian casualty rate of 20%, it admitted that figure could be inaccurate. The article then quoted a counterterrorism official describing the rate as closer to 5%.[40] Even without substantiation, administration framing was accepted. Another external source used in this period was commentary from Pakistani officials. However, it was generally used to confirm strike information rather than to contest administration framing.[41]

Editorials and Meta-commentary

Another facet of specific framing is the use of editorials to set focal points for coverage. As this style of article allows greater freedom for advocacy and criticality, it also offers insights into the NYT staff's dispositions toward drone technology.[42] This category often displays

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[35] David Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), 436.

[36] Daniel Klaidman, *Kill or Capture: The War on Terror and the Soul of the Obama Presidency* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2012), XIV.

[37] See Appendix A for all following references to figures, charts, and graphs.

[38] "Lethal Force Under Law," *New York Times*, October 10, 2010.

[39] Academics/Experts are coded as those who either work as a university professor or at a think tank. Drone-tracking projects cited are the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, New America Foundation, and The Long War Journal. The advocate category represents primarily ACLU personnel, but also Codepink, or attorneys who are not professors. See Appendix B for additional Code Definitions.

[40] Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "No Secrets In the Sky," *New York Times*, April 26, 2010.

[41] This was not coded as I did not plan to discuss foreign governments' framing.

[42] Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, 373.

shifting framing more overtly than other more limited article types. In addition, they often contain meta-commentary about the work that journalists have been doing. In a sense, editors function somewhat like officers to a platoon of underling journalists. They direct their staff through editorial decision-making, but rarely give direct orders.[43] In this time period, there are very few editorials on drone warfare. Ones that mention the weapon generally do so in passing while discussing military budget cuts or the Afghan Surge.[44] If engaged more directly, drones are considered in a strategic context, treating them as a non-controversial matter of fact.[45] This is illustrated in an editorial after the Bin Laden raid that discusses Pakistan's untrustworthiness and pattern of privately accepting drones while publicly complaining about them.[46]

The only instance of a more thorough examination was an editorial on October 10, 2010.[47] While it called for increased transparency surrounding drones, it also carried a clear assumption that Obama's foreign policy differed significantly from Bush's policy. It merely asked that he dispel any doubts otherwise. Even without access to information, the editorial claimed that, "So far, President Obama's system of command seems to have prevented any serious abuses."[48] The editorial did ask for significant reforms,[49] but it stood alone in this time period and exhibited a generally conciliatory tone.

Treatment of Drones as a Subject or Object

Whether or not drones were treated as a subject of significant inquiry was another aspect of specific framing.[50] Initially, investigative works on the subject were uncommon. Journalists primarily mentioned drones as an aside while discussing the Afghan War or stability in Pakistan.[51] The extent to which drones were "off the radar" is illustrated by coverage of a CIA "hit squad" program in July 2009. Rather than provoking a comparison and legal debate about

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[43] Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*, 96–97.

[44] "Mr. Gates's Budget," *New York Times*, April 8, 2009; "Mr. Obama's Task," *New York Times*, November 19, 2009; "$1.75 Billion Boondoggle," *New York Times*, July 16, 2009.

[45] December 8 2009 Pakistan and the War

[46] "Pakistan After Bin Laden: The Killing Shows Why the U.S. Can't Trust Pakistan, and Why It Can't Just Walk Away."

[47] "Lethal Force Under Law."

[48] Ibid.

[49] It raises concerns that the approval process for strikes remains entirely within the administration and asks for public guidelines, limited targets, last resort use, and independent oversight.

[50] Before online publishing, this could have been examined through the amount of space devoted to a subject. However, the internet has made that a less precise measure.

[51] Helen Cooper and Thomas Shanker, "Obama Afghan Plan Focuses on Pakistan Aid and Appeal to Militants," *New York Times*, March 13, 2009; Sabrina Tavernise and Pir Zubair Shah, "Pakistan Faces Tough Battle In Stronghold Of Insurgency," *New York Times*, June 16, 2009.

targeted killing with drones, they were primarily mentioned as a politically and logistically easier option.[52] Figure 6 demonstrates the relative lack of coverage as a subject in this period. While there were articles treating drones as a subject, many of them were merely reports that a strike had occurred. In addition, the highest point in this period was still barely over half the maximum in the case.[53] Another aspect of this facet of specific framing was the quantity of op-eds or opinion pieces discussing drones. Other than a momentary spike during the escalation of strikes in early 2010, Figure 7 corroborates the previous findings of relative inattention. Beyond these quantitative findings, the absence of framing as a subject of inquiry is most apparent in a qualitative sense as journalists rarely dwell on the topic.

Tone of Coverage

The following aspects of specific framing move to focus more directly on linguistic changes and content selection. Overall, the tone of coverage in this period was neutral. It portrayed drones as an effective and precise weapon against the threat of terrorism. As illustrated in the previous chapter through Figure 2, coverage in this period overwhelmingly framed drones through an unproblematic or indifferent tone. This is illustrated in more detail through Figure 8 which shows the tone of coverage over time. This aspect of framing also appeared in White House Press Briefings via journalistic reactions and questioning. However, there were few interactions and a generally neutral tone in that space. Nevertheless, journalists did complain about secrecy interfering with their ability to report on drones. This was done by sarcastically referring to the program as the "world's worst-kept secret," or an "official fiction."[54] The following sections will analyze the thematic specific framing of journalists.

Strategic Framing

Throughout the first two years of the Obama administration, journalistic framing of drone warfare was firmly rooted in the strategic context of Afghanistan and the need to respond to the threat of Al Qaeda. The effectiveness and precision of drones were not questioned and were instead presented as a fact. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate the regularity of those strategic frames. As the Afghan Surge debate unfolded, drones were also presented as an alternative to ground forces. Advocates against the military buildup from the political right and left believed terrorist attacks

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[52] However, the potential for civilian casualties and public backlash were mentioned when discussing drones in this article. Scott Shane, "Government Hit Squads, Minus the Hits," *New York Times*, July 19, 2009.
[53] The highest spike in treatment as an object was due to deteriorating relations with Pakistan and the Bin Laden raid.
[54] Bergen and Tiedemann, "No Secrets In the Sky"; "Lethal Force Under Law."

could be prevented with a much lighter footprint and emphasis on drones.[55] Ironically, these same political groups would hold vastly different opinions of drones by the end of the case.

An example of this specific framing appears in the coverage of the strike that killed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan leader Baitullah Mehsud.[56] While several children were wounded and 11 others were killed including his wife, mother-in-law, and father-in-law, the coverage concentrated on the value of eliminating Mehsud.[57] Instead of civilian casualties, journalists concentrated on Pakistani-American cooperation, the future of the Pakistani Taliban, and his previous terror attacks, such as assassinating former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Another example appeared after the Christmas bombing attempt in 2010, when editorials called for action against Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and framed drone strikes as an acceptable response.[58]

Legal Framing

As mistrust grew between Americans and Pakistanis in late 2010, specific framing began to shift toward a more legal focus. Throughout this period, journalists raised heightened concerns over violations of Pakistani sovereignty. However, they were frequently countered by the fact that Pakistani leaders publicly complained about strikes, while privately supporting and even requesting them.[59] Figure 11 demonstrates this trend and the significant spike in concerns surrounding the Raymond Davis saga and Bin Laden raid in early 2011. This led to a much more regular specific frame centered on American disregard for Pakistani sovereignty. Nevertheless, the frame continued to emphasize the non-drone related causes of contention over targeted killing. Drone warfare gained some attention after the strike that killed roughly 38 civilians on March 17, 2011. However, an unequivocal and fierce denial of noncombatant status by American officials lessened that effect.[60] This focus on a negative aspect of drone warfare was a novel shift in specific framing, but remained relatively minor during this time period. This is evident in Figure 12, which displays direct references to legal issues rather than discussions of sovereignty.

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[55] Scott Shane and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Buildup: A Necessity?," *New York Times*, September 8, 2009.

[56] Pir Zubair Shah, Sabrina Tavernise, and Mark Mazzetti, "U.S. and Pakistan Say Taliban Chief Is Believed Dead," *New York Times*, August 8, 2009.

[57] While later coverage highlighted this element, the civilian deaths received one sentence in a 1497 word article.

[58] "The System Failed"; "Now Yemen," *New York Times*, December 31, 2009.

[59] Jane Perlez, "Pakistan Rehearses Its Two-Step On Airstrikes," *New York Times*, April 16, 2009.

[60] Even if journalists were concerned, the Obama administration's monopoly on informational capital prevented them from making a strong case against governmental framing. "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis."

Governmental Practices of Secrecy and Transparency

The foundation from which the Obama administration's specific framing flows is rooted in a balance between two primary practices. One is based in the need for a democratic government to be held accountable by its citizens, while the other aims to sustain an adequate level of secrecy for the maintenance of national security. The practice of transparency is heavily tied to the previous chapter's discussion of the foundational importance of democratic public engagement and the symbiotic relationship. In terms of intelligence programs, a great quantity of transparency practices flow from the 1995 Clinton Executive Order declassifying all materials older than 25 years unless there are "overwhelming security objections."[61] In terms of more recent documents, it can take the form of responding to Freedom of Information Act requests about classified programs.[62] It also appears through unauthorized leaks, background given to journalists, and the official declassification of national security information. Nevertheless, this initial period was primarily characterized by the deeply entrenched practice of secrecy and the practice of transparency will play a greater role in the following chapters.[63]

One of the primary concerns of the executive branch is the need for secrecy in order to protect US citizens. From their perspective, each secret that becomes public could endanger particular methods of surveillance or covert operations.[64] This concern for keeping Americans safe became even more pressing in the aftermath of 9/11, where the new Department of Homeland Security and USA Patriot Act greatly increased bureaucratic barriers to information. This led to new categories of classification that complicated an already difficult process for journalists.[65] John L. Walcott of McClatchy Newspapers said the changes effectively eliminated the capacity to call high officials for conversation. Instead, journalists have to "reach deeper into the bureaucracy, and talk to multiple people. And opinions are sharply divided now about almost everything."[66] These legal and bureaucratic practices of secrecy created a disposition towards over-classification of information when it may not be vital.[67] As a result of these practices, the

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[61] Dover and Goodman, *Spinning Intelligence: Why Intelligence Needs the Media, Why the Media Needs Intelligence*, 23.

[62] Nevertheless, these often received the Glomar response that they could "neither confirm nor deny." Ibid., 15.

[63] The practice of transparency remains more implied through the symbiotic relationship and executive branch dispositions towards justifying their policies to the public. The following chapter will demonstrate this effect.

[64] This logic will be explored in the section on governmental background knowledge.

[65] Siegal, "Secrets about Secrets: The Backstage Conversations between Press and Government," 4.

[66] Ibid., 11.

[67] Ibid., 23–24; Papandrea, "Lapdogs, Watchdogs, and Scapegoats: The Press and National Security Information," 243.

executive branch has "virtually unbridled power to control the flow of national security information to the public."[68] This creates an environment where officials are unable to disclose information and there is little incentive to increase transparency without provocation.

The influential nature of the practice of secrecy makes it highly difficult for officials to set the bureaucratic wheels in motion to declassify and present information to the public. The tension between the executive branch's practices of secrecy and the practice of transparency to legitimate policy to the public is clearly captured in the words of Jeh Johnson, former General Counsel to the Department of Defense:

> Transparency is hard … The reality is that it is much easier to classify something than to declassify it, and there are huge bureaucratic biases against declassifying something once it is classified. Put 10 national security officials in a room to discuss declassifying a certain fact. They will all say, 'I'm for transparency,' but at least seven will be concerned about second-order effects. Someone will say, 'This is really hard, we need to think about this some more,' the meeting is adjourned, and the 10 officials go on to other, more pressing matters.[69]

This anecdote demonstrates the capability of the practice of secrecy to outweigh the practice of transparency. The very nature of national security issues requires a balance which leans toward secrecy. However, this period exhibited a clear imbalance that became increasingly apparent through the program's "public but secret" nature. Beyond the bureaucratic aspect of secrecy, there are also legal consequences attached to leaking information. This helps reinforce the practice of secrecy by further complicating the executive branch's capacity to engage in more transparent framing. In the following section I will zoom in on the specific frames that were enabled and constrained by these practices. First, I will overview different spaces of interaction followed by the particular frames employed by the executive branch.[70]

Specific Framing of the Obama Administration

Comments for New York Times Reporters

In this time period, the primary space for governmental specific framing was through direct commentary on articles being published about drones. By offering comments anonymously or on background, the executive branch could engage in specific framing to shape the debate about drones. This method of specific framing is highly common in national security

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[68] Papandrea, "Lapdogs, Watchdogs, and Scapegoats: The Press and National Security Information," 240.
[69] Charlie Savage, "Former Pentagon Lawyer Offers Pros and Cons of Drone Court," *New York Times*, March 18, 2013.
[70] These sites do not necessarily have to be physical, but instead are constituted through the interaction of the executive branch and journalists.

and intelligence areas and journalists accept that can be the only available source of information.[71] Figure 4 illustrates the regular use of this technique and space throughout the case.

During this initial period, the use of anonymous comment-giving often corresponded with successes or times of political value. A majority of these comments framed drone usage in vague strategic terms, referring to the "enormous heat we've been putting on the leadership and the mid-ranks."[72] However, the killing of Baitullah Mehsud led a senior administration official to offer highly specific information taken from the video of the strike. The official provided graphic detail, stating that, "his torso remained, while half of the body was blown up."[73] This level of specificity broke with common practice, but matches the overall trend of anonymously shaping information to the administration's political advantage by emphasizing a significant success.

Press Briefings

Another important space for specific framing in this case is the White House Press Briefing room. It offers the chance to observe direct interactions and contestation between the two communities. The space is highly structured and the Press Secretary is often given specific and limited information to disseminate. He is also able to move the briefing forward to new questions by calling on other reporters. During this period, drones were rarely discussed, as very few questions were asked about the subject.[74] There were two interactions in 2009 and another in 2011. In late 2009, drones were mentioned as an alternative strategy to increasing ground forces in the Afghan Surge. However, Press Secretary Robert Gibbs quickly said he would not be commenting on internal deliberations, neither confirming nor denying the proposition.[75] The second briefing in 2009 was on the same topic, but did not lead to a real response.[76] The 2011 briefing focused on drone use in Libya and while Carney mentioned unmanned aircraft, the

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[71] Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power*, 436.

[72] Eric Schmitt and David Sanger, "Some With Qaeda Leave Pakistan for New Havens," *New York Times*, June 12, 2009.

[73] Shah, Tavernise, and Mazzetti, "U.S. and Pakistan Say Taliban Chief Is Believed Dead."

[74] The classified nature of the program means the administration would not raise the topic of its own accord.

[75] In 2013, during the height of the drone debate, Former Press Secretary Gibbs admitted he was told to "not even to acknowledge the drone program." Robert Gibbs and Ben Rhodes, "White House Press Briefing - September 23, 2009," September 23, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Briefing-by-White-House-Press-Secretary-Robert-Gibbs-and-Obama-National-Security-Speechwriter-Ben-Rhodes-9/23/09; Katie Glueck, "Robert Gibbs: I Was Told Not to 'Acknowledge' Drones," *Politico*, February 25, 2013.

[76] However, Gibbs does discuss the need to deal with safe havens in Pakistan indirectly. Robert Gibbs, "White House Press Briefing - October 5, 2009," October 5, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/briefing-white-house-press-secretary-robert-gibbs-2.

exchange was not substantive.[77] This space was not highly used for specific framing in this period, but will serve to illustrate particular frames in the following chapters.

Speeches[78]

While fairly uncommon in this time period, specific framing also appeared through the use of public speeches by senior administration officials at universities and legal societies. This space allowed the executive branch to justify the program through highly legalized framing. It also had two key characteristics that made it a valuable space for the Obama administration. First, if offered the capacity to present information without contestation.[79] Second, it served to establish a "speech-trail" of transparency that officials could reference. While there are only two speeches in this period, they will play a greater role in the following chapters.

The first speech was given by Legal Adviser to the Department of State Harold Koh on March 25, 2010. In a sense, the decision to use this particular official was itself a form of specific framing. Koh's reputation as an advocate for human rights made him an unlikely public face for the program. As a result, many within the executive branch thought he could provide especially strong cover for the President's policy.[80] It was the first speech made by an administration official referencing the program and focused heavily on the legal case for targeted killing. Interestingly, Koh was also more explicit in discussing drones than speeches for years afterwards.[81] He stated that, "it is the considered view of this Administration... that U.S. targeting practices, including lethal operations conducted with the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, comply with all applicable law, including the laws of war." Koh also specifically argued against critics of "advanced weapons systems" and the view that targeted killings are assassinations.[82]

The second speech on June 29, 2011 was by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John Brennan. In contrast to most other speeches, Brennan made

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[77] Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - June 20, 2011," June 20, 2011, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/06/20/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-6202011.

[78] All administration speeches and John Brennan's Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing have "thematic snapshots" derived from coding which are located in Appendix A. These will not be explicitly referenced each time a speech occurs, but will help illustrate the shifting themes used in speeches.

[79] While some speeches contain questions & answer periods, they were often with student populations and rarely made news. Even the important exception of the Brennan remarks about civilian casualties was the result of his choice of wording in a specific claim, rather than contestation by the student.

[80] Klaidman, *Kill or Capture: The War on Terror and the Soul of the Obama Presidency*, 214.

[81] With John Brennan's April 30, 2012 speech being the first to make an explicit reference to drones since Koh.

[82] Harold Koh, "The Obama Administration and International Law" (Annual Meeting of the American Society of International Law, March 25, 2010).

a strategic argument rather than a legal one. [83] The speech very overtly used particular thematic framing, but was more opaque than Koh's speech. He referred to drones as "unique assets" and implied their use in denying a safe haven to Al Qaeda.[84] Interestingly, it appears that slightly increasing attention to drone warfare may have limited transparency in speech-giving.

Nevertheless, speech-giving created a unique space and vehicle for transparency. These speeches were clear and organized efforts to frame drone technology to the public and were not a required space like press briefings. Instead, they offered an opportunity to establish legal rationales without contestation and provide source material for quotation by journalists. The following sections will focus on the themes employed in the administration's specific framing.

Evasion as a Frame

The government's primary response to the drone debate in this period was a refusal to confirm or deny information. This specific frame often took the form of dodging questions or vague language. Citing legal and security rationales, administration officials publicly stated their inability to comment. This appeared when Robert Gibbs avoided a question by sidestepping the drone portion and pivoting to say that he could not get into internal discussions.[85] At this point, even questions focused on drone use in the Afghan Surge rather than Pakistan were evaded. This frame remained dominant in White House Press Briefings, which are tightly controlled to offer only specific information to the public. This is primarily due to the adversarial nature of briefings, which will appear in the following chapter. Another example occurred near the end of this period, when General David Petraeus responded to a Senator's question about drones by discussing their use in Afghanistan in order to avoid admitting that the program in Pakistan existed.[86] This frame also appeared in speeches through indirect language. By overtly evading questions, the executive branch could establish that they could not discuss the topic publicly.

Precision Framing

Another primary specific frame employed to legitimate drone technology focused on its technological capacity for discrimination in targeting. This frame was very successful in shaping perceptions of drone technology during this initial period. It was frequently reinforced through

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[83] See Figure 18 in Appendix A. Brennan is currently serving as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. He is not a lawyer, which contributes to this framing choice.

[84] John Brennan, "Ensuring Al-Qa'ida's Demise" (Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, June 29, 2011).

[85] Gibbs, "White House Press Briefing - October 5, 2009."

[86] The question was during an open hearing where the program could not be discussed. Mark Mazzetti and Scott Shane, "Petraeus Says Afghan Pullout Is Beyond What He Advised," *New York Times*, June 24, 2011.

anonymous officials' comments to the NYT that emphasized the weapon's precision.[87] Another aspect of this frame was visible in executive branch claims that civilians killed were actually militants by referring to classified knowledge. In one particularly striking example, an official argued sarcastically that "these people weren't gathering for a bake sale, they were terrorists."[88] Fundamentally, this framing appeals to distinction in targeting under international law.[89]

Harold Koh's speech directly argued that drones help minimize civilian casualties, stating, "Our procedures and practices for identifying lawful targets are extremely robust, and advanced technologies have helped to make our targeting even more precise."[90] John Brennan deployed this framing with gusto, referring to "targeted, surgical pressure" with a "laser focus" aimed at "the cancer of al-Qa'ida."[91] Precision-based language represented a major part of executive branch efforts to define and legitimate drone technology. It was heavily employed by administration officials, even while they refused to admit to the existence of the program.

Legal Framing

The use of domestic and international law to frame drone warfare was also a favored tactic of the Obama administration.[92] While they refused to specifically discuss drone technology, officials frequently made detailed legal claims while opaquely referring to "unique assets" or "advanced technologies."[93] In this period, Koh offered the most complete and overt case that the use of force abides by all applicable law. This was done by arguing that the US is engaged in an "armed conflict" of "self-defense" against an "organized terrorist enemy."[94] Those terms were very carefully chosen for their legal implications. However, in other less convincing moments, the same legal framing was used. In the wake of the Khost Bombing, an anonymous official justified the unprecedented number of drone strikes by calling them, "the purest form of self-defense."[95] Another facet of this specific frame appeared through Koh's discussion of constraints on the use of force. He explained that targeting depends on the imminence of the

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[87] Shane and Schmitt, "C.I.A. Deaths Prompt Surge In Drone War."
[88] Salman Masood and Pir Zubair Shah, "C.I.A. Drones Kill Civilians In Pakistan," *New York Times*, March 18, 2011.
[89] Koh, "The Obama Administration and International Law."
[90] Ibid.
[91] This raises questions about dehumanizing language, which could prompt its own study. For the purposes of this thesis, I will bracket those issues. Brennan, "Ensuring Al-Qa'ida's Demise."
[92] Koh, "The Obama Administration and International Law."
[93] Ibid.; Brennan, "Ensuring Al-Qa'ida's Demise."
[94] Koh, "The Obama Administration and International Law."
[95] Shane and Schmitt, "C.I.A. Deaths Prompt Surge In Drone War."

threat, distinction, proportionality, and the sovereignty of the local state. Brennan's speech featured far less legalese, but also made a point to state that the US is using "every lawful tool" available.[96] This frame offered a valuable method for justifying drone warfare according to explicit socially recognized categories, without having to directly discuss the program.[97]

Ethical Framing

Beyond legality, administration officials also framed drone warfare as a tactic that abides by American values. This was commonly done by reinforcing how "great care is taken" to adhere to the laws of war and minimize civilian casualties.[98] These frames aimed to establish that the weapon was not being abused or used carelessly. The immoral charge of assassination was also countered through combined ethical and legal frames that pointed to self-defense.[99] This legitimated the use of force and attempted to diminish the image of the United States as the aggressor. Brennan's speech made an overt moral argument tied to strategy, stating that, "in all our actions, we will uphold the core values that define us as Americans... the most powerful weapons of all—which we must never forsake—are the values and ideals that America represents to the world."[100] He argued that respect for human rights sets the US apart from Al Qaeda and that violating that principle would play into the enemy's hands. This specific frame served as social signal equating drone warfare with other American military tactics.

Strategic Framing

The use of specific framing which accentuated the effectiveness and strategic value of drone warfare was also frequently utilized and generally accepted by journalists in this period. Then-CIA Director Leon Panetta called the campaign in Pakistan the "only game in town" to combat Al Qaeda's leadership.[101] The success of strikes and number of senior Al Qaeda members killed by the program were also consistently reinforced through unnamed officials.[102] This frame was heavily used in Brennan's speech, which made a largely strategic argument for

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[96] Brennan, "Ensuring Al-Qa'ida's Demise."
[97] i.e. All our efforts abide by the law, rather than stating that the drone program does.
[98] Koh, "The Obama Administration and International Law."
[99] Ibid.
[100] Brennan, "Ensuring Al-Qa'ida's Demise."
[101] Mark Mazzetti and Helen Cooper, "C.I.A. Pakistan Campaign Is Working, Director Says," *New York Times*, February 28, 2009; Leon Panetta, "Director's Remarks at the Pacific Council on International Policy" (The Pacific Council on International Policy, May 18, 2009).
[102] Mazzetti and Cooper, "C.I.A. Pakistan Campaign Is Working, Director Says"; Schmitt and Sanger, "Some With Qaeda Leave Pakistan for New Havens"; Mark Mazzetti and Scott Shane, "Evidence Mounts For Taliban Role In Car Bomb Plot," *New York Times*, May 6, 2010.

drone warfare. As the Obama administration looked to wind down the wars, Brennan argued that the best offense going forward would not always be large armies but rather "targeted, surgical pressure."[103] He also employed this frame to underscore the importance of working with partner nations to deny a safe haven to Al Qaeda. Finally, he touted the decimation of Al Qaeda's leadership at the fastest rate since 9/11.[104] This specific frame was extremely common, but evasive language created a conspicuous absence of what exactly was causing those successes.

Predominant Background Knowledge

The previously discussed practices and framing were informed by a set of practical logics that restricted and enabled particular performances, while shaping competency. These intersubjective expectations and dispositions are "know-how" or inarticulate knowledge that is embodied, enacted, and reified through practices.[105] I do not intend to claim knowledge of the psychological or neurological mechanisms underlying background knowledge, but posit that actors are informed by more than mere rational calculation or structural culture. [106] Instead, I argue that these outcomes were the result of a socially thick agency which rests on communities' background knowledge and practices. [107] In this section, I will more explicitly outline the practical logics that helped make the events of this initial period possible.

Background Knowledge of Journalists

The dispositions of American journalists are rooted in the previously mentioned foundational logic of democratic public engagement, which was enshrined and protected by the First Amendment. Throughout American history, this has produced a community of practice which considers its work a public service. As a result, journalists seek to move beyond mere commercial motivations to provide "broad social returns." [108] The American Society of Newspaper Editors' statement of principles reinforces this view that, "The American press was made free not just to inform or just to serve as a forum for debate but also to bring an independent scrutiny to bear on the forces of power in the society, including the conduct of

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[103] Brennan, "Ensuring Al-Qa'ida's Demise."

[104] Ibid.

[105] Adler and Pouliot, *International Practices*, 8.

[106] As with Neumann and Pouliot, I will leave this work for cognitive neuroscientists who are moving towards concepts such as "implicit learning" and "embodiment." Neumann and Pouliot, "Untimely Russia: Hysteresis in Russian-Western Relations over the Past Millennium," 110.

[107] Thus, I posit that journalistic framing is more than Tuchman's combination of organizational structure and work routines. Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978).

[108] Nacos, Bloch-Elkon, and Shapiro, *Selling Fear: Counterterrorism, the Media, and Public Opinion*, 9–10.

official power at all levels of government."[109] This statement betrays the fundamental practical logic of national security journalists that what they *do* in American society is to perform this constitutionally protected "watchdog function."[110] This background knowledge underwrites the practices of inquiry and framing, as journalists seek to act as a check to power while respecting national security. It also informs their preference for objectivity and minimal advocacy framing.[111] In this initial period, the following exogenous factors filtered through journalistic background knowledge to prevent journalistic attention in specific framing.

The Honeymoon Period

The first component was an aspect of American political life known as the "Honeymoon stage." As with most new presidents, Obama enjoyed a "benefit of the doubt" and resetting of dispositions toward his administration. A content analysis of the New York Times' coverage showed that Obama actually received an abnormally long period of positive coverage through 2009 and into 2010.[112] This was the result of a combination of positive journalistic perceptions of Obama and a disposition toward objectivity in coverage. Overall, it had the effect of initially limiting attention to the growing use of drone warfare.

This "benefit of the doubt" appeared through framing that lessened Obama's responsibility and ownership of drone strikes. Rather than associating initial use with his decision-making, the program's ownership remained tied to President Bush. Drone warfare continued to be "the policy of the Bush administration" throughout Obama's first year and into the second.[113] This "honeymoon" logic and perceptions of Obama's anti-war preferences created a sense that drone use must be a temporary solution. This effect is visible in Figure 13 which demonstrates the slowly diminishing ownership of President Bush.[114] As strikes intensified, there was a palpable sense of surprise as journalists adjusted to the reality of his administration.[115] Even in 2010, journalists assumed that Obama's policy was distinct from Bush and asked his

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[109] Ibid., 10.

[110] Siegal, "Secrets about Secrets: The Backstage Conversations between Press and Government," 2.

[111] This is due to the need for independent and impartial scrutiny. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*, 183.

[112] Stephen Farnsworth and Robert Lichter, "An Extended Presidential Honeymoon? Coverage of Barack Obama in the New York Times during 2009 and 2010," *Politics & Policy* 41, no. 3 (June 2013): 447–63.

[113] Pir Zubair Shah, "U.S. Missiles in Pakistan Kill 30, Including Taliban and Qaeda Fighters," *New York Times*, February 15, 2009.

[114] The rise in the latter part of the case moves into instances of comparing Obama with Bush in a negative light rather than statements of the program being a legacy from the Bush era.

[115] David Sanger, "Where To From Here?," *New York Times*, May 9, 2010; Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "C.I.A. Intensifies Drone Campaign Within Pakistan," *New York Times*, September 28, 2010.

administration to "go out of its way to demonstrate that it is keeping its promise to do things differently."[116]

Information as a Security Threat

The second exogenous factor was the sudden increase in attempted and successful terrorist attacks in 2010. These regular threats contributed to the absence of critical coverage. After the 2009 Christmas bombing attempt, the NYT responded with editorials encouraging US efforts to step up covert operations in Yemen, essentially blessing potential drone strikes.[117] While those articles are a drastic example, the logic of putting national security before information access forms a significant part of journalistic background knowledge. The taken-for-granted nature of this logic appears in a statement by Seymour M. Hersh, who exposed the My Lai massacre. He said that pre-publishing interactions with the government were "not necessarily patriotic: their job is to keep secrets, and mine is to find them out. But it's a common-sense thing. I don't want to put anybody in danger."[118] As a result, the consistent proximity of threats from Al Qaeda in 2010 blunted coverage and contributed to the symbiotic relationship's strength in outweighing the journalistic disposition toward more critical inquiry and framing.

Background Knowledge of the Obama Administration

During this initial period, the practice of transparency and statements about drone warfare were conspicuously absent.[119] This was the result of an imbalance between the two primary facets of the executive branch's background knowledge. Nevertheless, an examination of the logic of transparency offers some insights into its role. This aspect of background knowledge is fundamentally grounded in the importance of transparency as a democratically elected government. Within acceptable limits, the administration holds a disposition towards offering information to the public, whether it is for political or idealistic purposes.[120] In a sense, executive branch officials feel a duty to inform citizens.[121] In David Sanger's 2012 book on the Obama administration, almost every senior member of the national security team sat down for

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[116] "Lethal Force Under Law."

[117] "The System Failed"; "Now Yemen."

[118] Siegal, "Secrets about Secrets: The Backstage Conversations between Press and Government," 7–8.

[119] Except for Harold Koh's speech, which admitted to the existence of unmanned aerial vehicles.

[120] This helps explain why anonymous comments and public speeches, such as Harold Koh's, were given at all during this period.

[121] There is likely a variation in the strength of this disposition, but the following example illustrates how the logic informs elected as well as non-elected officials.

interviews.[122] Sanger points out that the officials were "acutely aware that their comments could be used by President Obama's political opponents in the impending 2012 election."[123] Nevertheless, most officials still allowed comments to remain on the record. This demonstrates the potential of the logic of transparency to outweigh domestic political concerns.[124] This facet of background knowledge acts as a counterweight and will be more visible in latter chapters.

The other component informing the executive branch is the deeply entrenched notion that it must act as the guardian of sensitive information on behalf of the American people. Classified information is a vital resource for national security and leaks have the potential to put Americans at risk through either increased vulnerability to attacks or decreased capacity to combat Al Qaeda abroad. This creates a powerful disposition towards secrecy which may appear overzealous to outsiders. Nevertheless, administration officials defend this inclination toward secrecy, stating, "these aren't a bunch of corrupt pols who are trying to keep secrets simply to cover their careers … these are well-intended people who are deeply concerned about keeping the American people safe.[125] The executive branch's responsibility for national security has a powerful effect that contributes to a status quo of secrecy rather than transparency. This is reinforced by legal restrictions which further impede transparency. As a result, officials refuse to comment or hint at the program's existence, even though merely acknowledging it would not seriously endanger its national security value.[126] This deeply entrenched background knowledge has contributed to the executive branch's history of abusing its monopoly on national security information.[127]

An additional factor that contributed to the logic of secrecy in this case was the notion of precedent-setting. Interestingly, it did not have the effect of incentivizing the codification of drone warfare under international law or publicly established guidelines. Instead, the administration was aware it was establishing precedent, but preferred to bide its time and take advantage of drones' strategic capacity while continuing to deny their use. By refusing to admit to drone warfare or confirm information, the administration exploited their value in counterterrorism without having to acknowledge the consequences of other states using targeted strikes. This created an incentive to avoid verifying any information, as arguments of precedent-

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[122] Albeit, most insisted on speaking on background.
[123] Sanger, "Where To From Here?," 435.
[124] Although, it is possible they merely preferred to shape the narrative rather than respond to it.
[125] Siegal, "Secrets about Secrets: The Backstage Conversations between Press and Government," 6.
[126] Gibbs and Rhodes, "White House Press Briefing - September 23, 2009."
[127] Papandrea, "Lapdogs, Watchdogs, and Scapegoats: The Press and National Security Information," 243.

setting required specific knowledge of how the weapon had been used. While this was clearly a temporary solution, it reinforced the deeply entrenched imbalance of practical logics which informed the Obama administration's specific framing.

The State of the Symbiotic Relationship

Fascinatingly, even as significant events unfolded during this time period, journalists continued to exhibit limited reflexivity and criticality. While this was partially the result of their practices and background knowledge, the state of the symbiotic relationship was instrumental in forming each community's "strategic" reaction to the other's framing. It played a dominant role in the constellation by limiting the realm of possible responses and shaping the communities' "sense of the game."[128]

In this period, the symbiotic relationship varied in strength, but resided in a clear state of homology. This was enabled by previously discussed background knowledge and exogenous events, but flowed out of the logic of democratic public engagement that underwrites the communities' relationship. Fundamentally, the alignment between each community's habitus and their relative position in the social game created a self-reinforcing inertia. This prevented journalists from perceiving the executive branch's incompetence in fulfilling its role in the relationship. In addition, the imbalance in informational capital on drones and the difficulty of contesting their position prevented journalists from substantively engaging in the social game or taking drones as a matter of concern. Even if journalists had doubts about the program, they lacked the capital to contest it. Without access to information, more critical framing would have been seen as incompetent within the journalistic community. Given the infeasibility of journalists critically engaging all potential news topics, the inability to gain adequate capital meant that drone coverage maintained the status quo even in the face of changing events.

On the other side, the state of the symbiotic relationship did not limit the executive branch in the same way. Their specific framing was primarily shaped by homology enabling the unrestrained performance of the logic and practice of secrecy. Interestingly, the strength of homology also enabled Harold Koh's more explicit mention of unmanned aerial vehicles due to the clear lack of journalistic engagement and informational capital.[129] As contestation slightly increased, the capacity to speak openly disappeared even as homology remained. This

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[128] Lamaison and Bourdieu, "From Rules to Strategies: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu," 113.
[129] Koh, "The Obama Administration and International Law."

demonstrates the fluctuations within the strength of homology itself. This period also masked the extent to which the executive branch's internal balance had tipped toward durable secrecy. In the following chapters, this will become problematic as the Obama administration struggles to adequately engage in the drone debate.

Summary

This chapter focused on a presumed counterfactual. Given journalists' role in society and disposition toward inquiry, they should have investigated an extensive increase in the use of a new weapon in a controversial geographic scope. In response to their failure to do so, I argued that the existing constellation of background knowledge, practices, and the state of the symbiotic relationship prevented a greater shift in inquiry and specific framing. In this period, journalists were most heavily influenced by homology and the lack of informational capital to contest drones in the social game. On the other side, the Obama administration's response was largely determined by the imbalance toward secrecy over transparency within their background knowledge and practices. The result was two different constellations of socially thick agency from which their "moves" in specific framing were made possible. However, the fuse that started a chain reaction in the drone debate was lit at the end of this period. Responding to a question after a speech on June 29, 2011, John Brennan chose to publicly claim for the first time that, "nearly for the past year there hasn't been a single collateral death because of the exceptional proficiency, precision of the capabilities that we've been able to develop."[130] The specificity of this restatement of precision framing lowered the threshold of required informational capital for journalistic contestation. Soon afterward, the unprecedented targeted killing of an American citizen added fuel to the fire.

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[130] "Brennan on Drone Civilian Casualties," *C-Span*, June 29, 2011, http://www.c-span.org/video/?c4483994/brennan-drone-civilian-casualties.

Table 2: An Overview of Shifts in Specific Framing in Chapter Two

Obama Administration		New York Times Journalists	
Comments for New York Times Reporters	Primarily anonymous comments offered corresponding to successes or times of political need.	Use of Governmental and External Sources	Largely trusting of administration officials' comments, with only a few citations of experts and tracking projects.
Press Briefings	Near-total evasion and pivoting to change the topic of questioning	Editorials and Meta-Commentary	Generally approached drones in a strategic context. Only example of a significant discussion displayed a conciliatory tone.
Speeches	Two speeches emphasizing legal and strategic framing respectively. The first admitted to lethal operations by UAVs, but the second backpedaled and became far less direct.	Treatment of Drones as a Subject or Object	Essentially remained off the radar and was treated as a mere tool used in counterterrorism.
Evasion as a Frame	This was the dominant response. It was characterized by a total refusal to acknowledge or comment on the program.	Tone of Coverage	Primarily neutral and unproblematic.
Precision Framing	This was frequently used and often reinforced by anonymous comments.		
Legal Framing	Primarily appeared in Harold Koh's speech through broad declarations that the US abides by the law.	Strategic Framing	Very commonly used to describe the program in context of the war in Afghanistan. Did not question effectiveness or precision framing.
Ethical Framing	Less common, but appeared through statements that the program does not violate American values.		
Strategic Framing	Frequently used to point indirectly to the success of counterterrorism efforts.	Legal Framing	Less common, but appeared through concerns over Pakistani sovereignty near end of this period.
Constellation of Socially Thick Agency	Homology allowed the unrestrained performance of secrecy practices. This contributed to an imbalance where only limited transparency appeared in anonymous comments and speeches that did not offer substantial information.	Constellation of Socially Thick Agency	The inertia of homology limited the performance of practices of inquiry and framing. This prevented substantial engagement in the legitimation process and led to the withholding of information due to national security.

Chapter Three: The Awakening
July 2011 - April 2012

> But the fact remains that the government's exuberance in talking -- strictly on its own terms -- about the C.I.A. drone strikes is a provocation that must be answered. The public has a right to know, and assess, the legal rationale for these extraordinary and highly visible state killings. The public should have documented details concerning civilian casualties of the drone strikes. And The Times should do all it can to force this information out into the open.
>
> -Arthur S. Brisbane, New York Times Public Editor[1]

In this chapter, I will overview the process by which drones became a subject of concern and increased journalistic inquiry. The impetus for this shift arose through two key events: an overreaching executive branch frame and the targeted killing of Anwar al-Awlaki, an American citizen. These incidents offered new opportunities for the contestation of drones as a social object. Through a lowered threshold of required informational capital and a clear focal point for coverage, journalists were finally able to substantively contest their position within the field. This led to the dissolution of homology and exposed the executive branch's inability to adequately respond due to their deeply entrenched logic and practices of secrecy. In order to illustrate these dynamics, I will first outline key events during this period. Next, I will engage in a discussion of journalistic practices and shifts in specific framing by the New York Times (NYT). Then, I will outline the practices and specific framing of the Obama administration. Finally, I will overview the role of each community's background knowledge and the state of the symbiotic relationship in catalyzing the drone debate.

Overview of Key Events

Analytically, this chapter truly began with the "Question & Answer" portion of John Brennan's June 29, 2011 speech. His definitive denial of *any* drone-related civilian casualties in nearly a year rang out like an unintended gauntlet for skeptics of the program.[2] By July 18, the drone-tracking Bureau of Investigative Journalism published a response citing ten separate strikes with civilian casualties.[3] However, the NYT did not critically examine the report until August 12 through an article directly comparing anonymous administration accounts with the Bureau's findings.[4] On September 30, a drone strike killed US citizen and Al Qaeda in the

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[1] Arthur Brisbane, "The Secrets of Government Killing," *New York Times*, October 9, 2011.
[2] "Brennan on Drone Civilian Casualties."
[3] Woods, "US Claims of 'No Civilian Deaths' Are Untrue."
[4] Scott Shane, "C.I.A. Is Disputed On Civilian Toll In Drone Strikes," *New York Times*, August 12, 2011.

Arabian Peninsula member Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen.[5] Roughly two weeks later, his 16 year old son Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, also an American citizen, would be killed in a separate strike.[6]

The beleaguered relationship between the United States and Pakistan continued to suffer in late 2011, reaching a near-total breakdown at the end of November. After two dozen Pakistani soldiers were killed by strikes from NATO helicopters and fighter jets, the Pakistanis closed supply routes and ordered the CIA drone program to vacate Shamsi Air Base in Western Pakistan.[7] While the conflict with Islamabad was rooted in manned errors, it provided an opportunity for opposition to the drone program. Attention to drone warfare increased and coverage progressively highlighted the American tendency to run roughshod over Pakistani concerns. In an attempt to defuse the situation, the US temporarily paused drone strikes from November 16, 2011 to January 11, 2012.[8] This contributed to the lower number of overall strikes in 2011.

In response, the Obama administration began to make public speeches offering a legal, ethical, and strategic case for the program while continuing to avoid direct references to drones. However, a Google+ Hangout with President Obama in late January 2012 led to an important and perhaps unplanned result.[9] A pre-recorded question about yielded typical framing, but represented the first time an administration official had used the term "drones" in public. More importantly, when another participant interrupted with a question about sovereignty, he responded by directly referring to covert strikes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. [10] Nevertheless, these statements were anomalies and the administration quickly backpedaled in press briefings and speeches.[11]

In the latter half of this period, journalists began to accentuate the inadequacy of congressional oversight and their continued lack of access to the legal memos on Awlaki's

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[5] American citizen Samir Khan was also killed in this strike, but was not an intended target. David Goodman, "Awlaki Killing Sparks Criticism on Left and Libertarian Right," *New York Times*, September 30, 2011.

[6] In this case, the Obama administration claimed he was killed as collateral damage while targeting someone else. Laura Kasinof, "Fatal Strikes Hit Yemen As Violence Escalates," *New York Times*, October 16, 2011.

[7] Salman Masood and Eric Schmitt, "NATO Strikes Kill Pakistani Forces, Raising Tensions," *New York Times*, November 27, 2011.

[8] Eric Schmitt, "Pakistan Drone Strikes Resume," *New York Times*, January 11, 2012.

[9] This live online event featured questions and discussion about many issues with a group of American citizens.

[10] "President Obama's Google+ Hangout," *The White House*, January 30, 2012, http://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2012/01/30/president-obama-s-google-hangout.

[11] This became evident the next day as Jay Carney refused to confirm what Obama had said and merely pointed to the President's statements. The term would not be used again until Brennan's April 30, 2012 speech. It is possible that the practices of secrecy apply less heavily to the President as the top executive, or that his position as the highest elected politician in the US creates a greater imperative for transparency.

killing. [12] Nevertheless, even as journalistic pressure mounted, the Obama administration authorized expanded use of drones in Yemen in late April. [13] While drone warfare had slowed from its height in 2010, it continued to expand geographically in response to novel threats. Although the use of strikes did not drastically shift in response to journalistic pressure, President Obama finally ordered John Brennan to offer a more comprehensive defense of the program by the end of this period.[14] This speech represented the first officially planned use of the term "drones" in public statement by an administration official.[15] It offered a wide-ranging defense of the program and marked the beginning of a new era in executive branch framing.

<div align="center">**Predominant Practices and Specific Framing**</div>

The following sections will illustrate the "moves" made by both communities during this period. For each group, I will first briefly overview their practices followed by the shifts in specific framing. The interactivity and reactivity of each community to the other's framing is clearly on display in this chapter due to Brennan's remarks. While their practices will remain constant throughout the case, I will now explore how shifts within the constellation of socially thick agency led to different expressions of those performances and facilitated the use of new specific framing.

Journalistic Practices of Inquiry and Framing

As briefly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the Brennan statement and Awlaki killing will alter the constellation informing journalists. As a result of the newfound availability of adequate informational capital and diminishing homology, the performance of the practice of inquiry will exhibit increased intensity. This unconstrained practice will create a self-reinforcing momentum. It will also lead to different specific framing as the NYT performs a more critical watchdog role. The practice of framing will also shift as drones start to become a subject of interest for journalists. This will begin to alter the tone and increase the quantity of coverage. While the fundamental nature of journalistic practices remains unchanged, the shifting constellation will have a catalyzing effect on their performance, which is rendered visible by the following facets of specific framing.

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[12] "The Power to Kill," *New York Times*, March 11, 2012.

[13] Eric Schmitt, "Yemen to Face More Drones," *New York Times*, April 26, 2012.

[14] *Open Hearing on the Nomination of John O. Brennan to Be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency*, 2013, 55, http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/130207/transcript.pdf.

[15] I make this statement based upon the administration's refusal to use the term after Obama's Google+ Interview.

Specific Framing of Journalists

Editorials and Meta-Commentary

Perhaps the most visible shift in specific framing appeared through editorials directly commenting on drone warfare. However, this was a qualitative rather than quantitative change. This was partly due to continued journalistic opposition to repetitive coverage. As such, the editorials correlated with the two key events.[16] After the Bureau of Investigative Journalism's report on civilian casualties, the NYT published an editorial voicing deep skepticism of the administration's claims of a perfect record. Citing the Bureau's research, it argued that even though civilian casualties appear to be declining, there is "credible evidence" of at least 45 deaths.[17] While the editorial acknowledged the strategic value of drone warfare, it was the first to go beyond hypothetical questions and concerns to portray it in a negative light.

In the wake of Awlaki's killing, Public Editor Arthur S. Brisbane penned a piece that opened by asking, "WHO can't America kill?"[18] It proceeded to outline the extreme secrecy surrounding the program and how the administration used it, "to shield the details while simultaneously deploying a campaign of leaks to build public support."[19] Brisbane then assessed the NYT's coverage of the topic. He said that it had done good work, citing Freedom of Information Act requests and a couple of recent, more critical articles. Nevertheless, he directly called for greater criticality, describing the administration's framing and actions as a "provocation that must be answered."[20] The adversarial tone of this article was a far cry from the previous chapter, where editorials assumed Obama was acting ethically. Nevertheless, Brisbane also made a clear statement that even with increased coverage, the NYT would not publish information that could jeopardize national security.

Use of Governmental and External Sources

Another aspect of specific framing that began to transform in this period was the use of additional sources to supplement quotes from administration officials. In the wake of Brennan's comments, journalists began to cite external sources with greater frequency. Figure 5 displays

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[16] This will shift as the debate becomes increasingly heated and commentary on the debate itself will become of interest to journalists. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*, 169.

[17] "The C.I.A. and Drone Strikes: To Build Credibility, the Agency Needs to Acknowledge Civilian Casualties," *New York Times*, August 14, 2011.

[18] Brisbane, "The Secrets of Government Killing."

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

this effect as citations of drone-tracking projects suddenly increased between June and August 2011. In addition, while previous citations had only referenced the Long War Journal, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism became a favored source after their report rebutting Brennan's remarks. That graph also illustrates the increased citation of academics and legal advocates after the Awlaki killing. Interestingly, there were multiple references to experts who supported the program, but were critical of its secrecy.[21] The quotations from advocates primarily came from lawyers of the American Civil Liberties Union who objected to the strike. While these citations were direct responses to the key events, this shift also marked the beginning of more regular use of external sources as a specific framing technique.[22] Finally, as the Obama administration's specific framing began to rely on speeches, quotes from those named officials were increasingly used to supplement unnamed sources.[23] The relationship between speeches and named citations is quite clear in Figure 4, as it drops off after the period of speech-giving ends.

Treatment of Drones as a Subject or Object

As journalists began to devote energy to covering drones, this period exhibited a shift toward treating them as a topic of interest. Figure 6 demonstrates this steady rise in the number of articles with drones as a subject. Nevertheless, it only surpassed the peak of coverage from 2010 near the end of the period. While treatment as an object in articles continued to be very common, the overall gap between these two measures diminished. Qualitatively, this period contained an even more apparent trend toward becoming a matter of concern. The number of op-eds and opinion pieces in Figure 7 fluctuated in this period, but initiated an upward trend toward the end. Editorial decision-making regarding contributed articles also shifted the focus of coverage. This appeared in pieces concerning domestic drone surveillance or the potential for drones to lower the threshold for war and undermine democratic oversight due to lessened risk.[24] These pieces were part of an overall shift to increase attention on drones as a subject requiring greater debate.

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[21] Overall, experts were generally cited to provide detail on the program and had mixed opinions. Shane, "C.I.A. Is Disputed On Civilian Toll In Drone Strikes"; Brisbane, "The Secrets of Government Killing."

[22] The numbers drop down after the initial spikes due to journalistic practice and aversion to repetition.

[23] This demonstrates a preference for on the record comments as well as the value of speech-giving to shape content.

[24] Peter Singer, "Do Drones Undermine Democracy?," *New York Times*, January 22, 2012; Somini Sengupta, "Watch Out for Drones, A.C.L.U. Warns," *New York Times*, December 15, 2011.

Tone of Coverage

Beyond the previously mentioned shifts in specific framing, this period represented the origin of a persistent qualitative change in coverage of drone warfare. Rather than merely reporting the occurrence of strikes, journalists began to more actively discuss the negatives and positives of their use. This is visible in Figure 8, which shows a significant uptick in problematic NYT coverage by the end of this period.[25] It also appeared through novel questions during press briefings, where reporters began to ask whether unilateral strikes could be doing more harm than good.[26] Another example was the substantial increase in the use of "assassination" to describe targeted killing. While dozens of Al Qaeda leaders had been targeted and killed, it took an American citizen to tie it to drones.[27] Figure 14 demonstrates the sudden change and eventual resurgence of the term's use after Awlaki's killing.

The limitations of framing within journalistic practice constrained the capacity for shifting the tone of coverage. While issues can be juxtaposed or framed in particular ways, general reporting seeks to limit overt advocacy.[28] As a result, even during the latter half of this period, journalists generally voiced concerns indirectly through the medium of the breakdown in Pakistani-US relations. [29] However, investigative works uncovering previously classified information about drones had the capacity to shift the debate while abiding by the "rules of the game." One particularly powerful example is Scott Shane's piece on "double tapping," or striking the same location a second time to kill those who help survivors.[30] This piece, while largely neutral in tone, raised serious questions about the ethics and legality of drone warfare. On the other hand, editorials and opinion pieces exhibited far less tonal restraint. In this period, Andrew Rosenthal began to routinely write critical pieces about drone warfare. In one article, he

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[25] This corresponds with the initial development of hysteresis due to the administration's ineffective ability to respond. This will be described in greater detail in the following chapter.

[26] By this point, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism's report had been released, but the NYT had not covered it. Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - July 29, 2011," July 29, 2011, 29, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/07/29/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-7292011.

[27] This term has specific legal implications which will be further discussed below.

[28] Journalistic credibility is often rooted in ideas of "expertness" and "trustworthiness" which focus on providing a truthful account of "reality." Chris Peters and Marcel Broersma, eds., *Rethinking Journalism: Trust and Participation in a Transformed News Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 47.

[29] Declan Walsh, "Major Review By Pakistan Calls for End To Drone Hits," *New York Times*, March 21, 2012; Declan Walsh and Ismail Khan, "3 Are Killed By U.S. Drones In Pakistan," *New York Times*, April 30, 2012.

[30] Scott Shane, "U.S. Drone Strikes Are Said To Target Rescuers at Sites," *New York Times*, February 6, 2012.

directly juxtaposed the administration's statements that it cannot confirm or deny the program with examples of senior officials openly discussing it.[31]

The press briefing after Awlaki's killing represented a stark contrast to the previous tone of journalists. As Carney avoided confirming US involvement in the strike, journalists ignored his framing and asked about the evidence used to condemn him. Eventually, continued evasion led a journalist to ask in frustration, "Does the administration not see at all how a President asserting that he has the right to kill an American citizen without due process, and that he's not going to even explain why he thinks he has that right is troublesome to some people?"[32] This was not a singular event, as frustration over secrecy in January 2012 led a reporter to call it "a façade." [33] Journalistic specific framing had become more adversarial and skeptical of governmental frames. The following thematic discussion will further illustrate this point.

Transparency Framing

Upon examining journalists' specific framing, their reaction to the key events of this period is clear. The disprovable character of Brennan's remarks and unprecedented nature of the Awlaki killing created an interest in information access to clarify details of the program. Continued secrecy in response to journalistic inquiry led to a frame in which executive branch responses were merely duplicitous efforts to block public scrutiny.[34] This fed into growing concerns regarding the administration's treatment of leaks and journalism writ large. [35] Transparency framing used governmental secrecy as a focal point for critical coverage. Figure 15 demonstrates how both mentions of the program's secrecy and overt calls for greater transparency became more common in this period.

This specific framing shift meant that the previous chapter's description of the "world's worst-kept secret" moved from being a somewhat innocuous statement to something considered deeply problematic. [36] Journalists also began to use drones as a symbol of general over-classification and inflexibility.[37] One article pointed out how officials cannot even comment on

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[31] Andrew Rosenthal, "Secrets and Lies," *New York Times*, March 29, 2012.
[32] Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - September 30, 2011," September 30, 2011, 30, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/30/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney.
[33] Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - January 31, 2012," January 31, 2012, 31, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/31/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-13112.
[34] Rosenthal, "Secrets and Lies."
[35] This will also play a greater role as separate controversies arise in the following chapter. David Carr, "Blurred Line Between Espionage And Truth," *New York Times*, February 27, 2012.
[36] Bergen and Tiedemann, "No Secrets In the Sky."
[37] Scott Shane, "A Closed-Mouth Policy Even on Open Secrets," *New York Times*, October 5, 2011.

widely reported information from Wikileaks, such as strikes in Yemen, due to its continued classification.[38] Journalists applied transparency framing to emphasize the "alternate reality" created through executive branch framing.[39] This period exhibited a heavy focus on secrecy surrounding drones, as journalists attempted to uncover additional information about the program.

Legal Framing

Another theme which gained increased importance in this period was the use of legalistic framing. Figure 12 illustrates this rapid increase in journalistic attention to the legal dimensions of drone warfare. This came largely in response to the killing of an American citizen and the Obama administration's heavy use of legal framing. The previous chapter's focus on Pakistani sovereignty continued, but fascinatingly, journalists largely ceased to mention Pakistani leaders' tactic of secretly supporting strikes, while publicly complaining. Figure 11 shows the abrupt disappearance of this counter-frame. This illustrates journalists' shifting perception of drones.

The most prevalent shift in legal framing during this period appeared through the use of the term "assassination."[40] This has legal implications, as the United States government is specifically prohibited from utilizing this tactic under an Executive Order and corresponding criminal statutes.[41] Thus, this particular framing tacitly contests the legality of drone warfare and portrays the weapon in a negative light. One particularly striking example was an opinion piece which featured a list of people who had been assassinated, including Anwar al-Awlaki, Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Osama bin Laden, and John Lennon.[42] This framing created a newfound focus on the constitutionality and legal rationale for the Awlaki strike. On October 9, 2011, the NYT published an in-depth report and summary of the administration's secret legal memorandum. The article questioned the quality of classified evidence against Awlaki and debated the administration's argument that the Fourth Amendment guarantee of "due process" does not require judicial process due to the imminence of a terrorist threat. The article also discussed the executive branch's nuanced definition of imminence.[43]

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[38] Charlie Savage, "A Not-Quite Confirmation Of a Memo Approving Killing," *New York Times*, March 9, 2012.

[39] Shane, "C.I.A. Is Disputed On Civilian Toll In Drone Strikes."

[40] See Figure 14

[41] Eric Holder, "Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at Northwestern University School of Law" (Chicago, March 5, 2012).

[42] Peter Catapano, "Views to a Kill," *New York Times*, October 14, 2011.

[43] The legalized speeches given throughout this period continued to provoke journalistic debate, especially Eric Holder's speech which indirectly defended the Awlaki killing. Charlie Savage, "Secret U.S. Memo Made Legal Case to Kill a Citizen," *New York Times*, October 9, 2011.

Obama-Focused Framing

While the honeymoon period and perceptions of Obama may have prevented scrutiny in the previous period, the opposite effect appeared in this chapter. Rather than offering the "benefit of the doubt," his anti-war public image led to framing as a hypocrite. Journalists increasingly tied the program to Obama, rather than treating it as a Bush-era legacy. This was exacerbated by the two key events and continued secrecy. One piece even went as far as referring to his use of power as "worse than the Bush team when it comes to abusing the privilege of secrecy."[44] Obama's hawkish policies were expounded upon in a contributed piece titled, "Warrior in Chief," which outlined how a Nobel Peace Prize winner ended up being "one of the most militarily aggressive American leaders in decades."[45] Calling Obama "more Teddy Roosevelt than Jimmy Carter," it noted the "strange, persistent cognitive dissonance about this president and his relation to military force."[46] This captures the adjustments in journalistic perceptions of Obama. Interestingly, a separate sub-narrative formed around the 2012 elections, where drones were a positive symbol of Obama's strength on national security issues.[47] Nevertheless, that point was only made in passing and the general trend was increasingly negative.

Strategic Framing

This aspect of specific framing continued to be common. Although coverage was shifting, journalists still framed drone warfare as a generally effective and precise weapon against terrorist groups. When strikes in Pakistan paused for nearly two months, the NYT even voiced concerns that the hiatus was helping militants regroup and increase attacks against US forces in Afghanistan.[48] Nevertheless, strategic framing did become relatively less common as other frames increased. Rather than being the primary frame, it often appeared when journalists briefly admitted the weapon's utility. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate how it was still regularly used until a brief drop in both effectiveness and precision framing after the two key events.[49] While these traits were not necessarily doubted, journalistic focus had moved to secrecy and information gathering.

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[44] Rosenthal, "Secrets and Lies."
[45] Peter Bergen, "Warrior in Chief," *New York Times*, April 29, 2012.
[46] Ibid.
[47] This is the result of historic perceptions of Democrats as weaker than Republicans on issues of national security.
[48] Eric Schmitt, "Lull In Strikes By U.S. Drones Aids Militants," *New York Times*, January 8, 2012.
[49] Increased citation of administration speeches using strategic and precision framing also contributed to their use.

Investigative pieces in this period also had the effect of problematizing previous strategic arguments. By examining "double tapping" and "signature strikes," which aim at clusters of people based on patterns of behavior rather than identities, journalists began to cast doubt on the administration's claims.[50] By pursuing additional information, previously unassailable frames become less potent. However, these changes remained relatively minor at this point.

Governmental Practices of Secrecy and Transparency

As the journalistic community reacted to the events of this period, the previously masked practices of the executive branch were exposed. The firmly established practice of secrecy continued to dominate the administration's capacity to respond to journalistic inquiry. However, while the Obama administration saw its performance as competent, it was also aware of shifting journalistic framing. As a result, the practice of transparency contributed to a move toward speech-giving to justify the drone program. Nevertheless, the imbalance toward secrecy substantially limited attempts to legitimate the weapon, as officials could not openly admit to its use or say its name.[51] Although the administration attempted to react within those constraints, their ineffective capacity to respond provoked additional scrutiny from journalists.

Specific Framing of the Obama Administration

Speeches

The primary space utilized by the Obama administration for specific framing in this period was speech-giving. Compared to the previous chapter's two speeches from two speakers in thirty months, this period contained five speeches from four speakers in ten months. While one speech took place before Awlaki's killing, four were given in the last ten weeks of this period. As described in the last chapter, speech-giving's benefit of minimally-contested presentation played a significant role here.[52] In fact, Obama's advisers' referred to them as "framing speeches," which aimed to provide context and vision for policy and prevent the need to react defensively in the future.[53] These performances took place in highly legalized spaces with all but one occurring at Harvard, Yale, and Northwestern Law Schools. These audiences understood the technical legal cases being presented without additional information to confirm

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[50] Charlie Savage, "At White House, Weighing Limits Of Terror Fight," *New York Times*, September 16, 2011; Shane, "U.S. Drone Strikes Are Said To Target Rescuers at Sites."

[51] While the President says "drones" halfway through this period, it will not be until the end of this period that another official makes a speech that is clearly planned to admit to their use.

[52] As well as the "speech-trail" effect, which will appear in the following chapter.

[53] Klaidman, *Kill or Capture: The War on Terror and the Soul of the Obama Presidency*, 130.

indirect claims. The final speech by John Brennan occurred at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, where the audience fit Obama's goal of presenting and defending the policy.[54]

While the initial speeches did not exhibit significant framing shifts, Attorney General Eric Holder's speech made a very explicit argument that American citizens are not immune to targeting by "technologically advanced weapons."[55] Nevertheless, his detailed legal framing neglected to mention Awlaki's name. It was not until Brennan's April 30, 2012 speech that a substantial shift appeared in specific framing. For the first time, Brennan directly stated that the US government uses "remotely piloted aircraft, often referred to publicly as *drones*" for targeted strikes.[56] After years of references to "unique assets" and "technologically advanced weapons," the administration had purposefully referred to drones in a speech.[57] Nevertheless, secrecy continued to shape specific framing. The speech directly referenced Awlaki, but did not admit to his killing. It also illustrated the gap in conceptions of transparency by referring to previous speeches as evidence that, "the United States government has never been so open regarding its counterterrorism policies and their legal justification."[58] Nevertheless, speech-giving offered a valuable space to provide quotable material and indirect legal arguments, while staying within practical constraints.

Press Briefings and the Google+ Interview

In contrast to speech-giving's relative engagement, press briefings continued to be dominated by evasion. As journalists became more tenacious in their questioning, Jay Carney remained extremely limited in his ability to respond. The briefing after Awlaki's death was a striking example as he was authorized to state the importance of the event but could not admit US involvement.[59] On January 31, 2012, Carney actually held up a piece of paper with a

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[54] Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."

[55] The other speeches remained highly legalized and exhibited an assumption that the public should trust the administration to conduct itself properly. John Brennan, "Strengthening Our Security by Adhering to Our Values and Laws" (Harvard Law School, September 16, 2011); Jeh Johnson, "National Security Law, Lawyers and Lawyering in the Obama Administration" (Yale Law School, February 22, 2012); Holder, "Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at Northwestern University School of Law."

[56] This was the first time since Harold Koh's initial speech that the technology had been named. Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."; Emphasis added.

[57] The administration had referred to drones in the past through President Obama's Google+ talk. However, those interactions were unscripted and officials did not repeat the term for 3 months.

[58] Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."

[59] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - September 30, 2011."

paragraph of text and said, "I'm going to attempt to forestall any further questions about potentially covert programs by saying that everything I can tell you about it is on this piece of paper, and I'm just not going to ... acknowledge or confirm any of that."[60] This space allows the Press Secretary to control who asks questions, but not their content. As a result, journalists began to regularly push the direction of the discussion to areas where Carney could not comment.

The danger of interactional spaces also appeared in President Obama's Google+ Interview, where a preselected question led to an interjected question and Obama's admission of covert programs in Pakistan.[61] Nevertheless, Carney still backpedaled by refusing to repeat the word "drone" or acknowledge the programs, leading to the infamous piece of paper limitation.[62]

Comments for NYT Reporters

As with the previous period, officials continued to provide background information for journalists. Figure 4 illustrates this trend as well as the substantial effect of speech-giving to provide quotations from named officials. However, anonymous comments often appeared less convincing when juxtaposed with discussions of executive branch secrecy. The administration generally abstained from providing direct on the record commentary to the NYT. One additional statement that deserves mention is Brennan's clarification of the language in his remarks to say that the US had, "not found credible evidence of collateral deaths."[63] This sought to remedy the growing controversy from his denial of casualties, but did little to reverse its effects.

Evasion as a Frame

Thematically, the specific framing in this period continued to heavily emphasize the administration's inability to directly comment on the drone program. This evasion also appeared in other thematic frames by limiting their specificity. As previously described, direct questioning in press briefings almost always received this response. Carney often insisted that he could not comment on specific methods and pivoted to discuss another topic, such as the importance of relations with Pakistan.[64] In the wake of Awlaki's killing, he answered questions about "supposed covert programs" by pointing out that they contained "assumptions that I just won't

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[60] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - January 31, 2012."

[61] While I can only assume it was not a planned statement, the administration's total refusal to repeat the statements for months indicates that it was likely beyond the planned remarks.

[62] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - January 31, 2012."

[63] Shane, "C.I.A. Is Disputed On Civilian Toll In Drone Strikes."

[64] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - July 29, 2011."

address."[65] In that particular briefing, there were over 20 separate instances where Carney refused to comment. Another facet of this frame appeared through Carney's references to previous speeches by officials and refusal to confirm statements by President Obama.[66] By pointing to their remarks, he could avoid substantive responses to increased journalistic concerns.

Even in the Obama administration's comparatively responsive speech-giving, evasive framing surfaced. It often took the shape of continued reliance on euphemisms for drone use, such as "every lawful tool," the use of force "outside hot battlefields," and "technologically advanced weapon systems."[67] This vague language continued until John Brennan's confirmation of the program opened a new era of specific framing.[68] Evasive framing also appeared in President Obama's announcement regarding Awlaki's death, where he did not mention drones but declared his death a milestone and "tribute to our intelligence community."[69] Another instance arose through continued denial of the Awlaki legal memorandum's existence even after the NYT had published a detailed report and Senator Patrick Leahy accidentally implied its existence during a hearing with Attorney General Eric Holder.[70]

Precision Framing

While this frame played a significant role in shaping public perceptions, it also contributed to increased journalistic contestation due to Brennan's overreaching statement. This seemingly off-the-cuff remark during a question & answer period provided a target that journalists could challenge even with a lack of information. Nevertheless, while the comment sparked a shift in the case, journalists did not really contest the framing of drones as precise, but rather the perfection claimed by Brennan.[71]

As a result, the frame remained in frequent use. One particularly impressive example was an anonymous anecdote about an incident where an already-fired missile was diverted into open territory to avoid a newly visible non-combatant.[72] It was also used during the Google+ Interview by President Obama to argue that he is not "sending in a whole bunch of strikes willy

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[65] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - September 30, 2011."
[66] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - January 31, 2012."
[67] Brennan, "Strengthening Our Security by Adhering to Our Values and Laws"; Johnson, "National Security Law, Lawyers and Lawyering in the Obama Administration"; Holder, "Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at Northwestern University School of Law."
[68] Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."
[69] Shane, "A Closed-Mouth Policy Even on Open Secrets."
[70] Savage, "A Not-Quite Confirmation Of a Memo Approving Killing."
[71] Shane, "C.I.A. Is Disputed On Civilian Toll In Drone Strikes."
[72] Ibid.

nilly" and that "this thing is kept on a very tight leash."[73] This illustrated a combination of precision framing and the administration's awareness of increased concerns about drones. While Carney generally avoided commenting in press briefings, he did specifically argue that counterterrorism efforts are "exceptionally precise, exceptionally surgical and exceptionally targeted… with precision as an essential component"[74] Expanding these claims, Brennan also said that, "one could argue that never before has there been a weapon that allows us to distinguish more effectively between an Al-Qa'ida terrorist and innocent civilians."[75] He then hammered home his point with an artful series of precision framing stating that drones offer "surgical precision-- the ability, with laser-like focus, to eliminate the cancerous tumor called an al-Qa'ida terrorist while limiting damage to the tissue around it."[76] Overall, this frame remained static but added a component of careful targeting to technological capacity for precision.

Legal Framing

The use of speech-giving in this period significantly increased the detail and quantity of legalized framing. While the administration had previously laid out its case for the use of force, awareness of journalistic concerns surrounding Awlaki's death created a greater need for justification under the Constitution and international law.[77] This specific frame was most commonly used in speeches. By laying out a series of legal arguments through different officials, the administration could strengthen their justification without direct contestation. Beyond merely declaring the program's legality, the speeches also made specific legal claims.

This took the form of two nuanced interpretations of legal concepts: the definition of "imminence" in the case of terrorism and "due process" as non-judicial.[78] Officials also made a more direct case that the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) was not limited to "hot battlefields" and that "associated forces" of Al Qaeda were legitimate targets.[79] Complaints about targeting individuals and assassination were met with World War II references to

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[73] "President Obama's Google+ Hangout."

[74] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - January 31, 2012."

[75] Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."

[76] Ibid.

[77] Klaidman, *Kill or Capture: The War on Terror and the Soul of the Obama Presidency*, 215.

[78] Holder, "Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at Northwestern University School of Law"; Brennan, "Strengthening Our Security by Adhering to Our Values and Laws."

[79] Brennan, "Strengthening Our Security by Adhering to Our Values and Laws"; Johnson, "National Security Law, Lawyers and Lawyering in the Obama Administration."

purposefully shooting down Admiral Yamamoto's aircraft.[80] These arguments added significant detail to previous administration framing.

Attorney General Eric Holder's speech contained the most direct justification for the executive branch's right to kill an American citizen. While he never directly referred to Awlaki, he outlined the specific legal rationale and necessary conditions, such as an inability to capture the individual and their active engagement in planning to kill Americans.[81] While legalized framing allowed the administration to make its case without offering additional information, the nuanced legal definitions provoked additional scrutiny and perceptions of abuse.

Ethical Framing

The argument that drone warfare does not violate the principles and ethics of the American people was often tied to previously discussed legal and precision framing. In this period, it was briefly mentioned in most administration speeches. Generally, this took the form of broad declarations that the United States is a nation of laws and values.[82] However, this period also contained the first governmental recognition that this weapon raises new ethical dilemmas. In his speech defending the ethics of counterterrorism strategy, Brennan admitted that the capacity "to target a specific individual -- from hundreds or thousands of miles away -- raises profound questions."[83] In response, he argued that drone warfare abides by the international legal principles of necessity, distinction, proportionality, and humanity. This framing attempted to separate the fact that drones could be used immorally from the administration's current ethical conduct.[84] Brennan also accentuated the great care taken to achieve a high degree of confidence of an individual's militant status before launching a strike. He argued that the administration continues to abide by American moral principles and does not take these decisions lightly.[85]

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[80] This example had first been used by Harold Koh in 2010, but was referenced three times in succession in this period. Johnson, "National Security Law, Lawyers and Lawyering in the Obama Administration"; Holder, "Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at Northwestern University School of Law"; Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."

[81] Holder, "Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at Northwestern University School of Law."

[82] Brennan, "Strengthening Our Security by Adhering to Our Values and Laws"; Johnson, "National Security Law, Lawyers and Lawyering in the Obama Administration"; Holder, "Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at Northwestern University School of Law."

[83] Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."

[84] Albeit a case can be made that other artillery and missile technology have allowed killing from many miles away for many years.

[85] Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."

While this frame was comparatively less common, it was an important aspect of legitimation efforts.

Strategic Framing

This facet of specific framing also continued throughout this period. However, due to continued secrecy, it was largely framed through statements about the general success of counterterrorism efforts. Nevertheless, the administration continued to indirectly underscore the value of the program's ability to prevent future attacks by referring to how Al Qaeda's leadership had been "severely crippled."[86] On the other hand, strategic framing also indicated the need for counterterrorism efforts by arguing that while Al Qaeda was weakened, it continued to be a threat.[87] In his late April 2012 speech, Brennan asserted that the use of drones for targeted killing was a "wise tactic," which allowed for strikes within a short window of opportunity and in remote, treacherous terrain.[88] He also made the broader strategic point that they were superior to a ground deployment.[89] Nevertheless, the limitations imposed by secrecy were clearly visible when the administration touted counterterrorism victories, such as their statement within hours of killing Awlaki that could not say how his death had occurred.[90] While this framing continued to be useful, it was generally outweighed by increases in evasion, precision, and legal framing.

Predominant Background Knowledge

The following sections will outline the practical logics from which the previously discussed practices and specific framing were possible. This inarticulate knowledge underwrote each community's practices and contributed to the socially thick agency from which specific framing flowed. This component of the constellation played a more influential role in this period as the state of the symbiotic relationship changed.[91] I will now explain the ways in which background knowledge made the shifts in specific framing possible and how this affected the legitimation process of drone technology.

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[86] Brennan, "Strengthening Our Security by Adhering to Our Values and Laws."

[87] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - January 31, 2012."

[88] This is in contrast to cruise missiles which take far longer to arrive and can allow targets the chance to escape. Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."

[89] Ibid.

[90] Brisbane, "The Secrets of Government Killing."

[91] This will be expanded upon below.

Background Knowledge of Journalists

The shift in tone and attention to drones throughout this period was striking. How could the media have so quickly moved from offering the benefit of the doubt to critiquing the Obama administration's statements as coming from an alternate reality?[92] Fundamentally, this change was the result of less restricted practices of inquiry and framing. As the symbiotic relationship shifted, these components and their underlying background knowledge took on greater importance.

The spark that set off this change was Brennan's disprovable claim which lowered the required information threshold for contestation. This allowed journalists to dispute executive branch framing while abiding by their logics of acting as a "watchdog" and maintaining objectivity. This was in part due to the logic of framing's continued influence, which prevented a more drastic tonal shift in this period.[93] Brennan's claim was disprovable with minimal information and as a result, journalists could challenge it without using inordinate advocacy framing. Contesting his denial of civilian casualties also had little chance of damaging national security. The resulting specific framing grew out of a practical logic that competent journalism required acting as a check against government power.[94] By violating journalistic face validity, the claim provoked their disposition towards inquiry. As one article described it, "Perfection is rare in life; in war, rarer still."[95] By using investigative reporting to illustrate how the executive branch was misleading the public, journalists could continue to competently perform inquiry and framing. These combined logics informed the increased use of external sources and heightened focus on secrecy itself. This finally allowed journalists to contest the administration's informational capital. In a sense, the shifting symbiotic relationship enabled existing journalistic dispositions that required greater engagement in the social game. As Arthur S. Brisbane argued, it was, "a provocation that must be answered."[96]

The Awlaki killing also acted as a catalyst for increased inquiry. This exogenous event reinforced the extent to which executive branch secrecy had enabled the program to grow

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[92] "The C.I.A. and Drone Strikes: To Build Credibility, the Agency Needs to Acknowledge Civilian Casualties."

[93] Siegal, "Secrets about Secrets: The Backstage Conversations between Press and Government"; Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time*, 183.

[94] It is possible that the realization of their lacking attention to this issue in previous years further enhanced their reactivity.

[95] "The C.I.A. and Drone Strikes: To Build Credibility, the Agency Needs to Acknowledge Civilian Casualties."

[96] Brisbane, "The Secrets of Government Killing."

without public scrutiny. At this point, journalistic dispositions toward inquiry facilitated more investigative work and critical framing. Purposefully killing an American citizen was a monumental event and the Obama administration's continued secrecy was hindering adequate coverage. The previous honeymoon period and national security withholding were now distant memories, as journalists attempted to use transparency and legal framing to extract information. This was done by accentuating the duplicitous nature of secrecy, which only seemed to apply when journalists wanted access.[97] In one article, the near-comical level of secrecy surrounding public knowledge was highlighted in Brennan's response to a question about the drone program's existence, where he reportedly "struggled to suppress a smile, [and] said, "If the agency did have such a program, I'm sure it would be done with the utmost care [and] precision…"[98] The Awlaki killing and the administration's limited engagement allowed journalists to treat this issue as a matter of concern. Thus, coverage began to substantively shift as the NYT sought to re-establish itself as an agent of independent scrutiny.

The most overt example of the logic of inquiry appeared in Brisbane's meta-commentary and call for the NYT to do a better job exposing the program. He nearly described it as a duty for journalists to do a better job exposing the Obama administration's duplicity and potential wrongdoing.[99] This logic was also visible in the NYT's decision to become party to a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union that aimed to force disclosure of the legal documents behind Awlaki's killing.[100] The shift in this period was a return to the fundamental logics informing journalists, as they were no longer inhibited by the symbiotic relationship.

Background Knowledge of the Obama Administration

In this period, as the state of the symbiotic relationship shifted, the Obama administration also reacted more directly to journalistic framing. However, its capacity to do so continued to be constrained by the imbalance between the logics of secrecy and transparency. The administration was aware of the need to respond, but their specific framing illustrated the difficulty of shifting that balance. This section will outline the role of background knowledge in the socially thick agency from which the executive branch responded to journalistic framing.

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[97] Shane, "A Closed-Mouth Policy Even on Open Secrets."

[98] Brisbane, "The Secrets of Government Killing."

[99] Carr, "Blurred Line Between Espionage And Truth"; Rosenthal, "Secrets and Lies."

[100] This document was finally released by a federal appeals court on June 23, 2014. Rosenthal, "Secrets and Lies"; Charlie Savage, "Court Releases Justice Department Document Approving Killing of American," *New York Times*, June 23, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/24/us/justice-department-found-it-lawful-to-target-anwar-al-awlaki.html.

The logic of transparency continued to dispose administration officials toward publicly justifying the drone program. This expectation of a need to more effectively engage journalists contributed to the movement from anonymous commentary to more active speech-giving. This underlying disposition was also visible in President Obama's overly detailed response to an impromptu question during the Google+ Interview. The tension between governmental logics of transparency and secrecy was eloquently illustrated by his admission of covert strikes in Pakistan and the subsequent refusal of the administration to confirm them.[101]

The executive branch's internal debates also demonstrated a keen awareness that the two key events in this period were problematic. This was evident in Brennan's correction to his remarks and a discussion about the potential "public relations debacle" created by putting Awlaki on the kill list. In fact, a former senior Justice Department official said that President Obama and Attorney General Holder both argued for greater transparency, but were outweighed by bureaucracy and a disposition toward secrecy.[102] Additional internal deliberations offer fascinating insights into the tension within the administration's background knowledge. After Awlaki's death, Harold Koh and others argued that Congress should be shown the un-redacted legal memorandum. On the other side, members of the intelligence community and Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel argued strongly against it.[103] These conflicting facets of background knowledge led the executive branch to take the middle ground of making their legal argument in a speech by Attorney General Eric Holder.[104] The logic of transparency was visible in that speech as Holder pointedly stated that, "The American people can be – and deserve to be – assured that actions taken in their defense are consistent with their values and their law."[105] The previous examples illustrate how the logic of transparency continued to play a role in shaping the administration's response during this period. However, they also demonstrate how the imbalance towards secrecy prevented a shift toward more effective engagement with journalists.

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[101] While I do not have access to inside information, I posit that the fact that this transparency appeared during an off-the-cuff remark demonstrates a taken-for-granted disposition towards more effectively discussing the program. "President Obama's Google+ Hangout."

[102] Daniel Klaidman, "Obama's Drone Debacle," *The Daily Beast*, March 10, 2013.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

[105] This sentiment was echoed in John Brennan's April 29 speech where he called for the US government to do a better job of addressing Americans' concerns. Holder, "Attorney General Eric Holder Speaks at Northwestern University School of Law"; Brennan, "The Efficacy and Ethics of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy."

In this period, the specific framing of the Obama administration remained fundamentally rooted in the logic of secrecy. Even with an acute awareness of the potential public relations issues of not publicly explaining the Awlaki killing, the government could not confirm its involvement or coherently justify its position until months afterward. Concerns over their responsibility to protect American citizens and the notion of precedent-setting underwrote this disposition. This was visible in internal discussions where CIA lawyers worried about revealing a valuable covert program, the Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel argued against releasing privileged legal advice to their clients, and White House lawyers remained concerned that transparency could undermine their position in pending litigation, such as the NYT-ACLU suit.[106] These examples of the deeply entrenched logic of secrecy seriously limited the ability of officials to engage in the drone legitimation process. The embedded nature of these dispositions also appeared through the administration's response the ACLU's use of Freedom of Information Act requests to solicit diplomatic cables that had been already been released by Wikileaks. Even though the information was publicly available, the administration withheld several complete cables and redacted specific information in others.[107] This embodied example of the logic of secrecy illustrates the difficulty and bureaucratic obstacles that arose from the executive branch's perception that it could not increase transparency without negative consequences. This background knowledge existed in a state of fundamental tension that helps explain why speech-giving and legalistic framing were made possible in this period. Those specific frames allowed for increased engagement, without violating the balance in practical logics.

The State of the Symbiotic Relationship

The most important component in this chapter's shift was the dissolution of the previous chapter's homology. Through the two key events and continued secrecy, the journalistic community was able to contest its position within the social game by gaining increased access to informational capital. This had a self-fulfilling effect as increased attention and inquiry produced additional information and symbolic power. Fundamentally, these events caused journalists to realize that the executive branch was no longer properly performing democratic public engagement. This changed the state of their relationship as journalists used inquiry and framing to alter their position and the executive branch proved unable to adjust its balance between

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[106] Klaidman, "Obama's Drone Debacle."

[107] Scott Shane, "To State Dept., WikiLeaks Or Not, Secrets Are Secrets," *New York Times*, December 8, 2011.

secrecy and transparency. This led to a shift in the field which meant homology no longer constrained each community's performances. This had a significant effect on their constellations of socially thick agency.

Zooming in on the origins of this shift shows how homology and the lack of contestation led the executive branch to use highly detailed framing. Given their access to classified targeting information, the administration likely perceived the claim of zero civilian casualties as competent. However, it offered a powerful opportunity for the journalistic community to contest this issue. Due to the very low threshold of required information, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism quickly published a report contradicting Brennan's claims. Even within homology, journalists still sought to uncover information on national security issues to report to the public. This misleading claim provided an indispensable opportunity to engage in the drone legitimation process to a greater degree even without substantial informational capital.

As the administration continued to exhibit secrecy, the NYT began to fear that homology had created "the appearance that the government [was] manipulating them."[108] This sparked a more conscious effort in specific framing to contest governmental symbolic capital in the drone debate. Nevertheless, as homology broke down, the Obama administration's durable imbalance prevented them from adequately responding to slow or stop its disintegration. The executive branch's series of legalistic speeches provided few new insights and actually contributed to perceptions of inordinate secrecy. As a result, journalistic framing continued to exhibit increasing criticality and inquiry in order to secure additional informational capital. This effect was enhanced by the instantaneous nature of global communications technology, which subverted the Obama administration's monopoly on information. Thus, homology's disintegration became a self-reinforcing process as governmental inability bred journalistic inquiry, which then further exposed the executive branch's lack of engagement. From this period onward, the Obama administration sought to reestablish journalistic perceptions of homology, but struggled to do so in the face of deeply embedded practices of secrecy. In the next chapter, this will create a growing mismatch between the executive branch's habitus and their position in the field, otherwise known as "hysteresis."

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[108] There may have also been a sense of needing to make up for past appearances of manipulation. Brisbane, "The Secrets of Government Killing."

Summary

Throughout this chapter, the initial spark provided by Brennan's remarks and the Awlaki killing set off a chain reaction which fundamentally changed the nature of public debate about drones. In order to explain these shifts in specific framing from both communities, I argued that the dissolution of homology played an enabling role for journalists. Without the inertia provided by the symbiotic relationship, they were able to more effectively engage in contestation of their position within the social game. This was primarily based in the unconstrained performance of existing practices of inquiry and framing. This led to the pursuit of informational capital and specific framing which called into question the symbolic capital of the Obama administration in legitimating drones. The symbiotic relationship had a different effect on the executive branch. The lack of contestation helped enable an overly specific frame which led to journalistic contestation. As the other community began to contest its position, the deeply entrenched practice of secrecy was exposed and continued to outweigh that of transparency. This meant that the administration moved to justify drone warfare, but could not offer many details or arguments beyond legalistic statements. These shifts in the constellations of each community led to a change in the socially thick agency from which each group acted. This facilitated unconstrained journalistic performances and participation in the drone legitimation process. On the other hand, the Obama administration's constellation started to create a lag in their response to the social game. This represented the initial development of hysteresis, which will play a primary role in the following chapter, as journalists perceive continued secrecy as an indication of wrongdoing and the abuse of executive power. This chapter marked the beginning of process by which the drone legitimation debate began to head in an irreversibly negative direction. This will lead to a growing panic over drone warfare which will eventually enable a momentary but substantive shift by the Obama administration towards transparency.

Table 3: An Overview of the Shifts in Specific Framing in Chapter Three

Obama Administration		New York Times Journalists	
Comments for New York Times Reporters	Continued to be frequently used to anonymously provide background information for stories	Use of Governmental and External Sources	Began using tracking projects to balance administration claims. Increased the use of experts and legal advocates after Awlaki's killing. Also quoted named officials from this period's speeches.
Press Briefings	Continued to be dominated by evasive framing to avoid admitting to drone warfare.	Editorials and Meta-Commentary	Qualitative shift in attention to drones and secrecy due to the key events. Began to exhibit concerns.
Speeches	Became the primary site for framing which focused almost entirely on laying out a legal argument for drone use.	Treatment of Drones as a Subject or Object	Increased attention to drones as a subject of interest. However, this trend remained more qualitative than quantitative.
Evasion as a Frame	Continued to be dominant, but moved to openly voice their inability to comment. Also appeared through the use of vague language.	Tone of Coverage	Started to shift toward a problematic tone and exhibited frustration over secrecy.
Precision Framing	Remained a common frame, even though Brennan had overreached. Discussions of the care taken in targeting increased.	Transparency Framing	Newly developing frame which focused on problematizing secrecy and the administration's response.
Legal Framing	Substantial increase in detail and quantity of legal argumentation. Presented nuanced definitions of "imminence" and "due process"	Obama-Focused Framing	Increasingly common frame that focused on the hypocrisy of Obama's hawkish policy.
Ethical Framing	Did not substantially change, but became tied to legal framing. Also emphasized care in targeting.	Strategic Framing	Regardless of other concerns, coverage continued to treat drones as effective and precise.
Strategic Framing	Continued to be frequently used. Generally appeared through vague statements about the success of counterterrorism efforts.	Legal Framing	Moved toward focusing on the legality of targeted killing and started to directly respond to the administration's legal framing
Constellation of Socially Thick Agency	The previous homology enabled Brennan's overreaching frame and contributed to the durable imbalance toward secrecy over transparency. This meant that dissolving homology and their growing awareness of a need to respond could only produce engagement through legalized speeches.	Constellation of Socially Thick Agency	The dissolution of homology removed the constraints that had previously limited engagement in the legitimation process. This allowed for unconstrained performance of inquiry and framing. Nevertheless, the practice of framing itself exhibited limitations which prevented a more drastic shift in the debate.

Chapter Four: Rage Against the Machines
May 2012 – May 2013

> The government never wants to talk about drones, unless a high-value target is hit, in which case it invites the press in to watch the end zone dance. And could it be that because the keeper of the "kill list" was perceived as a liberal and had a background in constitutional law that he was cut some slack that others would not receive? Replace the name Obama with Bush and you could imagine the uproar.
>
> -David Carr, New York Times columnist[1]

The final portion of this thesis examines the effect of continued secrecy on the drone debate. As homology dissolved, journalists continued to increase contestation and attention to drones as a subject of inquiry. The Obama administration's previous speech-giving did little to curtail that interest and their inability to competently engage in the legitimation process created a mismatch between their habitus and position in the social game. This hysteresis led journalists to further increase pressure and voice concerns that secrecy must be indicative of an attempt to hide wrongdoing.[2] Eventually, this temporarily shifted the executive branch's imbalance between secrecy and transparency, resulting in a substantive speech and policy reforms.[3] In this chapter, I will first outline key events before overviewing the practices and specific framing of each community. Finally, I will discuss the role of background knowledge and the state of the symbiotic relationship in making the shifts in this period possible. This will illustrate the final component of how the negative public definition of drone technology was constructed.

Overview of Key Events

While the Obama administration had hoped to assuage public concerns through Brennan's April 30 speech, it quickly became clear that merely admitting to the program's existence was insufficient. Within a month, continued investigative reporting led to a key article about Obama's "kill list," that contained unprecedented detail regarding the process of target selection. It also displayed the extent of the president's personal involvement and raised serious questions about the methods for determining militant status.[4] During the same week, an article

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[1] David Carr, "Debating Drones, In the Open," *New York Times*, February 11, 2013.

[2] At times, coverage also bordered on violating the principles of the symbiotic relationship. This indicates the extent to which framing had shifted.

[3] Rather than a shift in the background knowledge or practices of the Obama administration, this is the output of a temporary reconfiguration of influence within socially thick agency.

[4] Jo Becker and Scott Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will," *New York Times*, May 29, 2012.

also uncovered the "Stuxnet" cyber-effort against Iran's nuclear program.[5] This combination of disclosures raised administration officials' concerns over damaging leaks.[6]

The previous period's increased coverage generated heightened public awareness and concerns about the program. American political activists focused on the topic, with the anti-war group "Code Pink" and others traveling to Pakistan in October 2012 to participate in a protest against drones.[7] By the fall, data from drone-tracking projects had been adapted into new formats via an iPhone app, Twitter account, and Instagram account.[8] Nevertheless, growing concerns did little to prevent the program's role as a stereotype-breaking positive for President Obama's reelection.[9] However, that positive political coverage was an exception to the rule.

On January 2, 2013, a federal judge ruled against the ACLU-NYT suit by refusing to force the disclosure of the Awlaki memorandum. However, the ruling voiced irritation with the "thicket of laws and precedents that effectively allow the executive branch of our government to proclaim as perfectly lawful certain actions that seem on their face incompatible with our Constitution and laws while keeping the reasons for their conclusion a secret." The judge admitted that, "the Alice-in-Wonderland nature of this pronouncement is not lost on me."[10] This meant that increased transparency would not quickly arrive via court order.[11]

Weeks later, the leak of an unclassified Justice Department "white paper" offered a glimpse into the specific legal argument used to justify Anwar al-Awlaki's killing.[12] The leak poured fuel onto a heated debate days before John Brennan's Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Hearing for confirmation as Director of the CIA.[13] It created a "perfect storm" of

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[5] David Sanger, "Obama Order Sped Up Wave of Cyberattacks Against Iran," *New York Times*, June 1, 2012.

[6] Scott Shane, "Renewing a Debate Over Secrecy, and Its Costs," *New York Times*, June 7, 2012.

[7] Mark McDonald, "Western Peace Activists Protest in Pakistan Against Drone Strikes," *New York Times*, October 7, 2012.

[8] The Instagram account "Dronestagram" started on October 23, 2012. The Twitter account @Dronestream began on December 11, 2012. The iPhone app was initially rejected in August 2012, but eventually approved on February 03, 2014 under the name Metadata+ ; Nick Wingfield, "Apple Rejects App Tracking Drone Strikes," *New York Times*, August 30, 2012.

[9] Richard Oppel, "On Stump in Ohio, Ryan Criticizes Obama's Military and Foreign Policies," *New York Times*, September 24, 2012.

[10] Adam Liptak, "Secrecy of Memo on Drone Killing Is Upheld," *New York Times*, January 3, 2013.

[11] "Misplaced Secrecy on Targeted Killings," *New York Times*, January 4, 2013; Savage, "Court Releases Justice Department Document Approving Killing of American."

[12] Charlie Savage and Scott Shane, "Legal Basis Cited to Kill Americans In Al Qaeda," *New York Times*, February 5, 2013.

[13] *Open Hearing on the Nomination of John O. Brennan to Be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency*.

media attention and unprecedented congressional leverage for information extraction.[14] While an information-sharing agreement with the committee facilitated approval, Brennan still faced a nearly 13-hour filibuster regarding the limits of executive branch power before confirmation.[15] Attorney General Eric Holder's refusal to rule out the use of domestic strikes in "extraordinary circumstances," had led Senator Rand Paul to temporarily block the vote.[16] He called for specific standards for drone use and voiced concerns over hyperbolic hypothetical scenarios such as killing political dissidents like Jane Fonda or "drop[ping] a Hellfire missile on a café in Houston."[17] Paul also discussed the use of drones abroad through Abdulrahman al-Awlaki's death, but remained far more concerned with domestic use.[18] It is indicative of the changing nature of the drone debate that these hypotheticals were taken seriously by journalists.

In the latter half of this period, scandals surrounding the Internal Revenue Service's targeting of political opponents, the 2012 attacks in Benghazi, and the Department of Justice's pursuit of leak sources from journalists combined to increase skepticism and anger over the Obama administration's conduct and secrecy.[19] This had the effect of exacerbating previous concerns about drone use. Finally, on May 23, President Obama directly defended the drone program in a speech at the National Defense University. The administration also declassified information on the killing of four American citizens and created a "classified policy guidance" for how and when drone strikes are used.[20]

While many of these reforms have yet to take shape, the use of drones has diminished in the past year. In Pakistan, there were no strikes between Christmas 2013 and June 11, 2014. In addition, Yemen saw a reduction in frequency and Somalia had no strikes in more than a year.[21] It is difficult to say whether these shifts were a strategic response to the successful elimination of

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[14] Brennan's presumed candidacy for the position had already been foiled once before due to comments regarding the Bush era interrogation program. Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife*, 216–217.

[15] Scott Shane, "Nominee to Lead C.I.A. Clears Hurdle After Release of Drone Data," *New York Times*, March 6, 2013.

[16] Ashley Parker, "Republicans, Led by Rand Paul, Finally End Filibuster," *New York Times*, March 6, 2013.

[17] Gail Collins, "Talk Of The Town," *New York Times*, March 7, 2013.

[18] "Unofficial Transcript: Hour 1 - Sen. Rand Paul Filibuster of Brennan Nomination," *Rand Paul: United States Senator*, March 6, 2013, http://www.paul.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=727.

[19] Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - May 14, 2013," May 14, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/14/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-05142013.

[20] Charlie Savage and Peter Baker, "Obama, In A Shift, To Limit Targets Of Drone Strikes," *New York Times*, May 23, 2013.

[21] Scott Shane, "Debate Aside, Drone Strikes Drop Sharply," *New York Times*, May 22, 2013; "Drone Wars Pakistan: Analysis"; Ken Dilanian, "CIA Winds Down Drone Strike Program in Pakistan," *Associated Press*, May 29, 2014, http://bigstory.ap.org/article/cia-drone-strike-program-pakistan-winding-down.

targets or a reaction to growing public pressure. Nevertheless, the first strike after Obama's speech occurred in less than a week.[22]

Predominant Practices and Specific Framing

In the following section I will briefly examine each community's practices followed by their shifts in specific framing. These performances offered insights into the underlying constellation of socially thick agency and how it was expressed. This period illustrated the Obama administration's slow move toward rebalancing secrecy and transparency as well as journalistic efforts to uncover information and more overtly contest the drone program. These components also demonstrated how the negative social definition of drones was made possible.

Journalistic Practices of Inquiry and Framing

Fundamentally, this chapter demonstrates how the dissolution of homology and development of hysteresis enabled an even deeper expression of the practices of inquiry and framing. As the executive branch continued to maintain secrecy, journalistic interest in drones expressed the strength of their disposition to act as a "watchdog" and pursue access on behalf of the public. Coverage continued to be shaped by the practice of framing and the limitations of different types of journalism. However, continued secrecy diminished the influence of those restrictions on particular aspects of specific framing. Without access to executive branch information, journalists were forced to rely on shifts in framing to help fulfill the practice of inquiry and check government power. This led to a more transparent effort to rebut administration framing through investigative reporting and opinion pieces discussing the frames' weaknesses.[23] As previously described, this reinforced the momentum created by informational capital, which in turn sparked greater interest and produced additional data. This led to changes in the tone and quantity of coverage. Articles still clustered around exogenous events, but also began to focus on the drone debate itself as journalistic interest increased. The following discussion of specific framing will further illustrate how the role of practices within the constellation was expressed in this period.

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[22] Even in a moment of heighted awareness of public opinion, strategic imperative outweighed optics. Mark Mazzetti and Declan Walsh, "Pakistan Says U.S. Drone Killed Taliban Leader," *New York Times*, May 30, 2013.
[23] Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will"; Andrew Rosenthal, "Targeted Killing in the U.S.A.," *New York Times*, March 6, 2013.

Specific Framing of Journalists

Editorials and Meta-Commentary

Once again, the most apparent difference in journalistic specific framing appeared through the use of editorials and meta-commentary. This was representative of a move toward discussing the drone debate itself in addition to external events. In one article, coverage was dissected using a content analysis of multiple news sources by Tara McKelvey. While she found that the quantity of coverage had increased, its tone and quality had not improved until after Awlaki's death and Brennan's April 30 speech. Overall, she argued, "the media fell short in its coverage."[24] This reflexivity became more common as editors sought to direct journalists towards greater critical coverage of the program.

While the quantity of editorials also substantially increased in this period, their content became increasingly adversarial and preoccupied with secrecy. The reflexivity of these articles also led to very clear statements regarding the administration's misleading framing and violation of the symbiotic relationship. Public Editor Margaret Sullivan's October 14 editorial skewered the program's immense secrecy and went as far as using quotation marks to describe militants killed by drones. She also argued that the NYT's coverage had been insufficiently aggressive in pursuing and uncovering specifics of the program.[25] This tonal shift represented a move from the previous chapter's statements that it was time to increase coverage to articles decrying the killing of children and arguing that journalists have not been adequately doing their jobs. The tone in editorials remained negative until Obama's speech, when it slightly abated. The NYT called the administration's transparency a "much-needed step," but still expressed skepticism.[26]

Use of Governmental and External Sources

Continued mistrust of governmental information led journalists to significantly increase the number of external sources cited in this period. Figure 5 illustrates how drone-tracking projects were routinely referenced as an alternative to government claims. However, they did not see as large of an increase as experts and legal advocates. The use of academics expanded substantially as the depth of debate increased, attaining unprecedented levels. In addition, human

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[24] These findings largely correlate with my own analysis, although I place the initial shift slightly earlier at the Brennan civilian casualty remarks. Carr, "Debating Drones, In the Open"; McKelvey, "Media Coverage of the Drone Program," 19.

[25] Margaret Sullivan, "Questions on Drones, Unanswered Still," *New York Times*, October 14, 2012.

[26] Their overall tone continued to discuss drones in a critical fashion, in part due to drones' public definition. Nevertheless, the speech did appear to be part of a move away from hysteresis. The Editorial Board, "The End of the Perpetual War," *New York Times*, May 24, 2013.

rights and legal advocates were cited in a steadily increasing fashion, reaching a substantial amount by the end of the case. These changes were indicative of a shift beyond merely commenting on the scale of the program through drone-tracking projects to engaging in deeper debate over the implications of drones from strategic, legal, and ethical perspectives. Figure 4 also demonstrates how the citation of named officials increased surrounding the Brennan confirmation hearing and Obama speech.[27] Editorial decisions to publish pieces by contributors also indicated a shift in specific framing. From the evisceration of Brennan's potential nomination as Director of CIA by Gregory D. Johnsen to an ethical discussion of drone warfare by John Kaag, the content of external contributions began to truly engage the debate over drone warfare.[28]

Journalists continued to use background information from administration officials, but also used external sources to balance those perspectives. While named officials cited in this period were largely quotations from speeches, an exception appeared in the well-sourced piece on Obama's "Kill List," where three dozen current and former advisers contributed information. Some of those sources, such as Thomas Donilon, Obama's national security adviser, even went on the record.[29] This investigative piece played a significant role in shaping the debate over drones and these on the record quotes strengthened its influence. Nevertheless, the overall shift in this aspect of specific framing was an overwhelming move toward the use of external sources.

Treatment of Drones as a Subject or Object

This facet of specific framing also moved in the direction of greater coverage. Figure 6 shows how the number of articles focusing on drones as a subject increased throughout this period. Although coverage had eventually dropped after the Brennan remarks and Awlaki killing, this period marked a steep incline in the treatment of drones as a subject of interest.[30] This trend reached its highest point during the debate surrounding the white paper leak and Brennan confirmation battle. At the same time, general coverage of drones as an object within counterterrorism efforts continued to appear with very high frequency.

In a qualitative sense, journalistic interest in the topic was also heightened. This was clear in the large investigative pieces published during this period. Along with the "Kill List" article,

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[27] However, these citations were also frequently references to speeches from the previous period.

[28] Gregory Johnsen, "The Wrong Man for the C.I.A.," *New York Times*, November 20, 2012; John Kaag, "Drones, Ethics and the Armchair Soldier," *New York Times*, March 17, 2013.

[29] Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will."

[30] This was the result of journalistic framing practices, which limited repetitive coverage after exogenous events.

the NYT published a lengthy feature explaining the process of targeting and killing Awlaki.[31] Another substantial piece detailed how the CIA agreed to kill Nek Muhammad, a Pakistani enemy of the state, to gain access to Pakistan's airspace.[32] These long-form articles added depth to coverage while unearthing striking and debate-changing information about the drone program. They also illustrated the increased resources being devoted to the topic. Another indicator of this increased focus appeared through mainstream op-ed contributors such as David Brooks, Maureen Dowd, and Ross Douthat who began to discuss the topic.[33] Figure 7 reiterates this point through the continuous and substantial increase in op-eds and opinion pieces about drone warfare.

Tone of Coverage

While the previous chapter laid the foundations, this period featured a drastic tonal shift. Figure 8 shows how problematic coverage finally began to outweigh unproblematic framing of drones. Journalistic specific framing had shifted from offering the "benefit of the doubt" to expressing outright frustration and dismay over secrecy and potential abuse. This change was most apparent in editorials and opinion pieces where there is greater freedom of tone. For example, Sullivan made a brief comment in an unrelated piece that, "many terrible crimes don't get much coverage, including the deaths of children in drone strikes in Yemen and Pakistan."[34] This framing served to cast doubt onto precision claims and increase perceptions that drone warfare was criminal.[35] Other instances of the tonal shift appeared through assumptions of abuse, such as reporting the morbid joke that the CIA sees "three guys doing jumping jacks" and thinks it is a terrorist training camp.[36] By the end of this period, the extent of the qualitative change in coverage was unambiguously visible in the NYT Editorial Board's statement that signature strikes "have slaughtered an untold number of civilians and become as damaging a symbol of American overreach as the prison camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba."[37] The following thematic frames will continue to demonstrate how specific framing around drones had transformed.

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[31] Mazzetti, Savage, and Shane, "A U.S. Citizen, in America's Cross Hairs."

[32] Mark Mazzetti, "A Secret Deal on Drones, Sealed in Blood," *New York Times*, April 7, 2013.

[33] David Brooks, "Florence And The Drones," *New York Times*, February 8, 2013; Maureen Dowd, "The C.I.A.'s Angry Birds," *New York Times*, April 17, 2013; Ross Douthat, "Obama's Artful Anguish," *New York Times*, May 26, 2013; Maureen Dowd, "Can 44 Subtract 43 From the Equation?," *New York Times*, May 26, 2013.

[34] Sullivan, "Questions on Drones, Unanswered Still"; Margaret Sullivan, "Politics Aside, the Gosnell Trial Deserves - and Is Getting - More Coverage," *New York Times*, April 15, 2013.

[35] This was reinforced by the resurgent regularity of the term "assassination" in Figure 14.

[36] Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will."

[37] The Editorial Board, "The End of the Perpetual War."

Transparency Framing

Throughout this period, journalists increased their calls for meaningful transparency regarding drone warfare. Even in the face of growing concerns, the Obama administration continued to exhibit heavy secrecy and reiterated how publishing secrets could damage national security. Journalists responded to those concerns with editorials lambasting efforts to crack down on national security leakers and explaining their importance for investigative reporting.[38] This facet of specific framing also began to take a more negative tone as requests for information were met with vague denials. One piece referred to reporting on drones as a "deadly version of the old telephone game," where the chain of whispers eventually ceases to have meaning.[39] Journalists also accentuated lacking congressional oversight by pointing out that the intelligence committees still lacked full access to the Awlaki memos.[40] An editorial after the ACLU-NYT ruling argued that it was far past time that light was shed on the program.[41]

Overt calls for transparency also became much more frequent. Figure 15 illustrates how both mentions of the program's secrecy and calls for transparency skyrocketed in this period. This appeared primarily in editorials which argued that "The drone program needs as much sunlight as possible."[42] Journalists also lauded a speech by former-administration official Harold Koh that emphasized the counterproductive nature of secrecy in fostering exaggerated perceptions of the program.[43] They also called the administration's lack of engagement with Congress, "a pattern verging on arrogance."[44]

Legal Framing

This period also contained a move to more directly rebut executive branch speeches and legal framing. Many of these arguments were still in response to the Awlaki killing, such as contributed pieces by law professors which raised concerns about violating due process under the Constitution.[45] Journalists also used the ACLU-NYT ruling to argue that secrecy was preventing

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[38] "A Pernicious Drive Toward Secrecy," *New York Times*, August 3, 2012; Margaret Sullivan, "The Danger of Suppressing the Leaks," *New York Times*, March 10, 2013.
[39] Sullivan, "Questions on Drones, Unanswered Still."
[40] Shane, "Nominee to Lead C.I.A. Clears Hurdle After Release of Drone Data."
[41] "Misplaced Secrecy on Targeted Killings."
[42] Margaret Sullivan, "The Times Was Right to Report - at Last - on a Secret Drone Base," *New York Times*, February 6, 2013.
[43] The Editorial Board, "How to Generate Distrust on Drones," *New York Times*, May 10, 2013.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Bruce Ackerman, "Protect, Don't Prosecute, Patriotic Leakers," *New York Times*, June 13, 2012.

a discussion of things that "seem on their face incompatible with our Constitution."[46] Oversight provided another focal point as a former general counsel to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence argued that Congress had a legal right to have greater access.[47] Figure 12 demonstrates this consistent use of legal framing and how the white paper and Brennan hearing led to significant increases in its use. In addition, journalists began to call attention to the implications of the vague and nuanced legal framing employed by administration officials. Rather than assuring the public, the administration's conceptions of imminence and due process created concerns about the abuse of executive power through broad legal definitions. When Eric Holder hesitated to specifically rule out the domestic killing of an American citizen in a café, Senators questioned him until he changed his language from "inappropriate" to "unconstitutional."[48] Journalists called this type of legalistic framing "maddening and suspicious," and others said it raised more questions than it answered.[49]

The "kill list" article had a particularly large effect in undermining the administration's precision and legal framing. It revealed that the CIA's method for counting civilian casualties, "in effect counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants… unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent."[50] This powerfully undercut previous framing and journalists moved to articulate increased doubts regarding the legality of signature strikes and CIA counting methods.[51] Previous concerns regarding sovereignty and assassination continued, but this article seriously weakened the administration's claims under international law.

Obama-Focused Framing

This period amplified the previous chapter's negative framing surrounding President Obama. Journalists began to portray drones as a symbol defining his administration and framed him as, "The Drone-Happy President."[52] The most important piece tying drones to Obama was the "kill list" article, which detailed his preference for personally deciding who lives and dies.[53] However, portions of the article portrayed Obama as taking this responsibility lightly, as he was

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[46] Liptak, "Secrecy of Memo on Drone Killing Is Upheld"; "Misplaced Secrecy on Targeted Killings."

[47] Vicki Divoll, "Who Says You Can Kill Americans, Mr. President?," *New York Times*, January 17, 2013.

[48] Rosenthal, "Targeted Killing in the U.S.A."

[49] Ibid.; Ryan Goodman, "The Drone Question Obama Hasn't Answered," *New York Times*, March 9, 2013.

[50] Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will."

[51] Johnsen, "The Wrong Man for the C.I.A."; Scott Shane, "Ex-Lawyer in State Department Criticizes Drone Secrecy," *New York Times*, May 9, 2013.

[52] Daniel Politi, "The Drone-Happy President," *New York Times*, June 7, 2012.

[53] Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will."

quoted referring to the choice to kill Awlaki as "an easy one."[54] This filtered into growing perceptions that the President should not have the power to be "judge, jury and executioner" for suspected terrorists, while also being subject to reelection concerns.[55] Articles also frequently mentioned Obama's past to insinuate hypocrisy. This was visible in a journalist's question of how, "as a constitutional law professor, he can square the idea that he has a kill list and is killing people who could be as young as 17 years old."[56] Obama's Nobel Peace Prize was also mentioned in a mocking fashion while referring to drone warfare.[57].

Ethical Framing

While this frame was less common, skepticism about the ethicality of drones also appeared through previously discussed concerns over civilian casualties and legality. Some articles also specifically debated the ethical implications of the program. John Kaag contributed a piece discussing the new and complex moral quandaries created by drone technology.[58] Another one of his articles explored the moral hazard of drones through the tale of Gyges' ring of invisibility, which allowed him to murder the king. It also questioned the ethics of precision by positing that just as a skilled dentist can painlessly remove the wrong tooth, a drone could kill an innocent while sparing those who live in his neighborhood.[59] This period also contained a lengthy two-part discussion of Just War by Jeff McMahan, which briefly mentioned targeted killing.[60] The depth of ethical framing by journalists had significantly shifted to take the issue more seriously with consistently negative findings.

Strategic Framing

Although precision framing had been undermined, journalists continued to refer to drones as an effective tool against terrorists. Figures 9 and 10 demonstrate this continued usage of both

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[54] The underlying issue with this "easy one" remark is that the public could not access the necessary evidence to make that decision or accept his position; Ibid.

[55] Scott Shane, "A Court to Vet Kill Lists," *New York Times*, February 9, 2013; "Too Much Power for a President," *New York Times*, May 31, 2012.

[56] Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will"; Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - May 29, 2012," May 29, 2012, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/29/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-52912.

[57] Peter Baker, "In Terror Shift, Obama Took A Long Path," *New York Times*, May 28, 2013.

[58] Kaag, "Drones, Ethics and the Armchair Soldier."

[59] John Kaag and Sarah Kreps, "The Moral Hazard of Drones," *New York Times*, July 22, 2012.

[60] Jeff McMahan, "Rethinking the 'Just War,' Part 1," *New York Times*, November 11, 2012; Jeff McMahan, "Rethinking the 'Just War,' Part 2," *New York Times*, November 12, 2012.

precision and effectiveness framing.[61] Even toward the end of this period when effectiveness diminished, some articles still argued that Pakistan needed the program.[62] Generally, journalists ceded the debate over effectiveness and turned to larger strategic concerns, such as the CIA losing its intelligence capacity by becoming a paramilitary organization.[63] Drones were also critiqued for their ability to weaken, but never eliminate the enemy.[64] This specific framing was reiterated through references to a "Whac-A-Mole" approach to counterterrorism and comparisons with the Vietnam War.[65] Journalists also began to discuss blowback, using a quote from General Stanley McChrystal which called drones useful but "hated on a visceral level."[66] This framing implied that drones may offer success in the short-term, but still increase instability and radicalization in the long-term.[67]

Governmental Practices of Secrecy and Transparency

The Obama administration continued to be constrained by the durable nature of the imbalance toward secrecy in this period. Even as journalists uncovered and published new information, the administration remained unable to comment on classified programs. Brennan's speech marking the end of the previous chapter enabled slightly more direct framing, but the executive branch continued to be highly restricted.[68] For instance, even after the white paper leak, the actual memorandum remained classified and Carney argued that journalists should be satisfied with the leaked document.[69] The influence of secrecy also appeared in attempts to use information on the 2012 attacks in Benghazi to get Brennan's nomination out of committee without having to share classified legal opinions.[70] This deeply entrenched practice continued to

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[61] Precision framing dropped a slight amount after the "kill list" article, but even as targeting was put into question, the technology continued to represent a more precise weapon than the alternatives.

[62] Declan Walsh, "U.S. Shift Poses Risk to Pakistan," *New York Times*, May 26, 2013.

[63] Bill Keller, "Cowboys and Eggheads," *New York Times*, April 15, 2013.

[64] David Rohde, "Drones, Brennan and Obama's Legacy of Secrecy," *New York Times*, February 8, 2013.

[65] Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti, "Counterterrorism Aide Is Choice to Lead C.I.A.," *New York Times*, January 8, 2013; Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will"; Lien-Hang Nguyen, "Exploding the Myths About Vietnam," *New York Times*, August 12, 2012; Mary Dudziak, "Obama's Nixonian Precedent," *New York Times*, March 22, 2013.

[66] Robert Worth, Mark Mazzetti, and Scott Shane, "Hazards of Drone Strikes Face Rare Public Scrutiny," *New York Times*, February 6, 2013.

[67] Ibid.

[68] *Open Hearing on the Nomination of John O. Brennan to Be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency*, 125–126.

[69] Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 5, 2013," February 5, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/05/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-2513.

[70] Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti, "Strategy Seeks To Bolster Bid Of C.I.A. Pick," *New York Times*, February 21, 2013.

shape specific framing, even as the administration became increasingly aware of journalistic concerns.

Nevertheless, the executive branch's practice of transparency also began to gain comparative influence during this period. Within the administration, it appeared through a progressively visible awareness of the need for a substantive response to public pressure. Officials began to admit that, "What we need to do is optimize transparency on these issues, but at the same time, optimize secrecy and the protection of our national security."[71] As a result, the balance began to slowly shift toward permitting slightly more transparent framing, which eventually led to a speech by President Obama. More importantly, this move was accompanied by the declassification of information regarding Americans killed in drone strikes and a Presidential Policy Guidance reforming drone use.[72] The fundamental nature of these practices did not change, but a momentary shift in their balance allowed for temporary transparency.

Specific Framing of the Obama Administration

Press Briefings

In contrast to the previous chapter's speech-giving, this period was largely dominated by interactions in press briefings. As journalistic inquiry intensified, Carney faced tenacious and skeptical questioning. However, Brennan's admission of the program's existence had finally enabled new levels of engagement.[73] After a reporter accused him of "dancing around the question of whether or not we kill civilians," Carney awkwardly objected but eventually admitted that he did not disagree with the premise that civilians had died.[74] In another instance, he admitted that classified documents had only been shown to congressional intelligence committees due to "heightened interest." [75] Carney also directly argued that increased transparency did not mean discussing every counterterrorism operation, but instead involved

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[71] While this statement seems like a great example of doublespeak, regardless of actual intent, it demonstrates a more significant reaction to journalistic concerns. *Open Hearing on the Nomination of John O. Brennan to Be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency*, 57.

[72] Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

[73] This is a comparative remark as he was still unable to offer much in the way of substantive information.

[74] Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 6, 2013," February 6, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/06/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-262013.

[75] Jay Carney, "White House Press Gaggle - February 7, 2013," February 7, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/07/press-gaggle-press-secretary-jay-carney-272013.

laying out the administration's legal and policy standards.[76] These responses would have been highly unlikely in the previous period and illustrated the gradual movement toward transparency.

Nevertheless, the statements Carney offered were often reiterations of previous framing rather than new admissions. After the white paper leak, Carney echoed Brennan's April 2012 speech that argued that strikes from remotely piloted aircraft "are legal, they are ethical, they are wise."[77] Throughout this period, Carney frequently referenced previous speeches as evidence of transparency and claimed that the administration had "talked quite openly" about counterterrorism programs. [78] Regardless, this space of interaction illustrated the heavily constrained but shifting capacity of the Obama administration to respond to journalistic inquiry.

Speeches and the Senate Confirmation Hearing

This type of specific framing dropped off significantly during this period. This may have been due to a hope that the Brennan speech would sufficiently appease journalists and the public. It is also possible that Brennan's upcoming Senate confirmation hearing offered a superior space for framing. Members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence held mixed opinions, but many saw an opportunity to extract information about the program.[79] Throughout the hearing, Brennan promised increased information-sharing, but frequently declined to comment on classified information. When asked about the evidence against Awlaki, he said he could not discuss any details. Senator Dianne Feinstein responded, "See, that's the problem. That's the problem," and argued that secrecy was counterproductive and creating misperceptions.[80] Overall, the hearing contained little new information on the program. However, Brennan did repeatedly state that the administration needs to do a better job presenting information to the public.

Compared to the previous chapter's five speeches, President Obama's May 23 remarks were the only use of this specific framing space during this period. His speech vigorously defended the drone program and outlined the existing limitations on the use of lethal force. Interestingly, the speech purposefully admitted that even with efforts to minimize them, drone

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[76] Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - May 29, 2013," May 29, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/29/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-5292013.

[77] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 5, 2013."

[78] Jay Carney and Jason Furman, "White House Press Briefing - February 13, 2013," February 13, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/13/press-gaggle-press-secretary-jay-carney-and-principal-deputy-nec-director; Carney, "White House Press Gaggle - February 7, 2013"; Carney, "White House Press Briefing - May 29, 2012."

[79] This led to moments of adversarial and supportive questioning throughout the hearing.

[80] *Open Hearing on the Nomination of John O. Brennan to Be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency*, 125–126.

strikes have caused civilian casualties.[81] However, Obama then framed drones against the alternatives of doing nothing or using conventional forces. The speech was a far more substantive and transparent appraisal of drones than in previous periods.[82] That effect was amplified by the declassification of information on the four Americans killed, in order to "facilitate transparency and debate on this issue and to dismiss some of the more outlandish claims that have been made."[83] Obama also called for the refinement and eventual repeal of the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF). This would effectively limit the use of drone strikes abroad.

The reforms and specifics of the speech were further detailed in a background briefing and U.S. Policy Standards and Procedures document. The briefing hinted at a preference for moving the program from the CIA to the Department of Defense and insinuated that strikes would be less necessary as the war in Afghanistan concluded.[84] After four and a half years, the balance had finally tipped toward transparency, albeit temporarily.

Comments for NYT Reporters

As is visible in Figure 4, this tried and true specific framing method steadily continued during this period.[85] However, one shift appeared in that anonymous officials began to admit concerns about the program. In one article, three former senior intelligence officials conceded that they had a hard time believing governmental civilian casualty counts.[86] Nevertheless, officials continued to generally avoid commenting on the record. When they did contribute comments, as in the "kill list" article, the quotes did little to counter the negative tone of journalistic framing. For instance, the fact that Obama called the decision to kill Awlaki "an easy one," likely aimed to insinuate that the evidence was clear, but it also created a sense that the

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[81] Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

[82] This is clear in Figures 25 and 16, which show the move toward reform framing and diverse themes in speeches.

[83] Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

[84] "Background Briefing by Senior Administration Officials on the President's Speech on Counterterrorism," May 23, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/background-briefing-senior-administration-officials-presidents-speech-co; "Fact Sheet: U.S. Policy Standards and Procedures for the Use of Force in Counterterrorism Operations Outside the United States and Areas of Active Hostilities," *The White House*, n.d., http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/fact-sheet-us-policy-standards-and-procedures-use-force-counterterrorism; Carney, "White House Press Briefing - May 29, 2013."

[85] Figure 4's increase in named officials primarily represents repetitions of quotations from speeches rather than original statements.

[86] Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will."

decision was taken lightly. [87] Nevertheless, that article was an outlier and anonymous commentary remained the preferred method for specific framing.

Evasion as a Frame

For a majority of this period, the Obama administration still avoided direct answers and refused to offer details about the drone program. Although Brennan had finally admitted to the program's existence, administration officials continued to publicly voice their constraints. In his confirmation hearing, Brennan frequently referenced this inability to comment on "certain covert activities," and repeatedly pivoted to speak about general counterterrorism efforts. [88] In other instances, officials rebutted statements without offering information to substantiate their claims. For example, Carney responded to a question about civilian casualty counts by saying, "I think your description of the policy is not quite exact," but did not specify how it was flawed. When the journalist followed up, he said he was not going to get into the "specifics of the process." [89] Referencing more detailed information in previous speeches also served as an evasive frame by allowing Carney to dodge a line of inquiry while arguing that, "we have been, as an administration, very transparent through a series of speeches." [90] This facet of specific framing remained in heavy use, but was increasingly balanced by other themes.

Reform-based Framing

This new frame embodied the administration's shifting response during this period, as officials began to admit that their efforts at transparency had been less than exemplary. Rather than primarily dodging inquiry as in previous chapters, the executive branch began to acknowledge the validity of questions and called the debate "healthy." [91] This represented the beginning of an incremental move toward reforms and transparency. As such, officials began to signal that, "We need to inform the public and explain to the public and to you the process that we're undertaking and the reasoning behind it." [92] In addition, the administration conceded that misconceptions of the program were rooted in their failed efforts to explain it. Officials argued

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[87] Ibid.

[88] *Open Hearing on the Nomination of John O. Brennan to Be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency*.

[89] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - May 29, 2012."

[90] Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - April 11, 2013," April 11, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/11/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-4112013.

[91] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 5, 2013"; Carney, "White House Press Gaggle - February 7, 2013"; Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - March 7 2013," March 7, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/03/07/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-372013.

[92] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 5, 2013"; *Open Hearing on the Nomination of John O. Brennan to Be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency*.

that increased transparency would allow the public to better judge its merits. Brennan called this, "critically important, because people are reacting to a lot of falsehoods that are out there."[93]

These frames marked a distinct shift in reflexivity by administration officials. Rather than denying faults and making broad statements in the program's defense, Brennan admitted that the US should acknowledge civilian casualties and Obama conceded that it was sometimes tempting to consider drones, "a cure-all for counterterrorism."[94] In an off-the-script moment, Obama responded to a protester interrupting his speech by saying, "The voice of that woman is worth paying attention to… these are tough issues and the suggestion that we can gloss over them is wrong."[95] During another Google+ Interview, Obama also admitted that, "it is not sufficient for citizens to just take my word for it that we are doing the right thing." He then called for greater congressional oversight and efforts to ensure public understanding of the program's limits.[96] This specific framing was a significant departure from previous periods and foreshadowed the substantive transparency that appeared at the end of the case.

Precision Framing

This reliable frame played a valuable role throughout the case and continued to be used regularly in this period. However, it was significantly undermined when the administration's method of counting civilian casualties was cast into doubt. This primarily affected perceptions of decision-making in targeting, rather than of drone technology itself. As a result, administration officials moved beyond broad declarations of precision to increasingly discuss the "great care" and "extraordinary measures" taken to avoid civilian casualties.[97] This ethical component was woven into precision framing to argue that the use of force only occurred, "under the most stringent of conditions" and that precision was enhanced by the "tools" that were available.[98] In addition, this specific frame produced comparative claims that "conventional airpower or missiles are far less precise than drones."[99] This logic also contributed to arguments that drones

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[93] *Open Hearing on the Nomination of John O. Brennan to Be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency*, 56.

[94] Ibid., 58; Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

[95] Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

[96] "Watch: President Obama Answers Your Questions in a Google+ Hangout," *The White House Blog*, February 14, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/02/14/watch-president-obama-answers-your-questions-google-hangout.

[97] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 5, 2013"; Carney, "White House Press Briefing - May 29, 2012."

[98] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - May 29, 2012."

[99] Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

were preferable to large-scale military deployments.[100] This more specific and reactive framing demonstrated the administration's growing awareness and engagement with journalistic concerns.

Legal Framing

While legalized framing continued in this period, it became relatively less prevalent due to the reduction in speech-giving. Nevertheless, in response to the white paper leak, administration officials reiterated well-trodden arguments of legality under the AUMF and Constitution.[101] Without the ability to discuss details of the Awlaki memorandum, the executive branch argued that the program's operation was held to "the highest possible standards."[102] As the specificity of legal questioning increased, Carney frequently pointed to previous speeches, while admitting that those questions were best answered by lawyers.[103] However, he also made an important point that had been lost during the panic over drones, saying, "it has nothing to do with the methodology here… all the same laws that applied to the President's authority apply now, whether it has to do with drones or other modes that you would use to prevent a terrorist attack."[104] This aimed to remind journalists that the government was just as unlikely to use a drone as a Black Hawk helicopter to launch Hellfire missiles within the United States.

Another subset of legal framing that began to frequently appear was a declaration of the need for and intention to create a "legal architecture" or framework for drone use. This was also rooted in reform framing and appeared most heavily in the context of the white paper leak and Brennan's hearing.[105] However, the concept had already been referenced during a fall 2012 appearance on the Daily Show with Jon Stewart. In the interview, Obama called for a legal architecture that would "make sure that not only am I reined in but any president's reined in terms of some of the decisions that we're making."[106] While this comment occurred in an election context, it foreshadowed a common aspect of specific framing employed in this period.

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[100] "Background Briefing by Senior Administration Officials on the President's Speech on Counterterrorism."
[101] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - May 29, 2012."
[102] Ibid.
[103] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 5, 2013."
[104] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - March 7 2013."
[105] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 6, 2013."
[106] "Barack Obama Pt. 2," *The Daily Show*, October 18, 2012, http://thedailyshow.cc.com/videos/g36uvc/barack-obama-pt--2; Scott Shane, "Election Spurred a Move to Codify U.S. Drone Policy," *New York Times*, November 24, 2012.

Ethical Framing

      The use of American values as a legitimation frame exhibited little change in this chapter. Carney frequently declared that the president would do what was needed to keep Americans safe while remaining "consistent with our values and laws."[107] As previously described, this theme also contributed to precision framing through the "great care" taken during targeting.[108] Obama's speech made a more substantive point when he said that our decisions surrounding drones would, "define the type of nation – and world – that we leave to our children."[109] However, he was not implying that the US had erred, but rather that it must avoid an endless war. Obama also made a more nuanced point that the alternatives to drone strikes did not offer a superior moral position.[110] Nevertheless, this frame did not play a major role in this period.

Strategic Framing

      The administration's increased capacity for engaging in the drone debate after Brennan's speech enabled more specificity in strategic framing. Going beyond mere statements of effectiveness, Obama argued that Al Qaeda's core was on the "path to defeat" and were now more concerned "about their own safety than plotting against us."[111] This was reinforced by citing documents from the bin Laden raid that voiced concerns over "air strikes." Comparisons to alternatives such as conventional weapons or ground forces were also used to frame drone warfare as the only feasible strategy. This tied into the common frame that the President had a responsibility to protect the American people by capturing or killing terrorists. Carney frequently argued that Obama had to take action against the diffuse threat of Al Qaeda.[112] This logic was echoed by Eric Holder who argued that increased transparency could "put at risk the very mechanisms that we use to try to keep the American people safe, which is our primary responsibility."[113] Another interesting shift in strategic framing was a more nuanced and realistic portrayal of drone technology. Rather than treating it as a wonder weapon, administration

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[107] Jay Carney, "White House Press Briefing - January 22, 2013," January 22, 2013, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/22/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-1222013.

[108] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 5, 2013."

[109] Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - May 29, 2012"; Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 5, 2013"; Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 6, 2013."

[113] Scott Shane and Charlie Savage, "Report on Targeted Killing Whets Appetite for Less Secrecy," *New York Times*, February 6, 2013.

officials were open about the limits and flaws of drones. This was visible in the denial that drones were a "cure-all" and admission of the "hard fact" of civilian casualties.[114]

Predominant Background Knowledge

While the previous sections examined the embodied performances of this portion of the case, I will now outline the dispositions that enabled and constrained them. In this chapter, taken-for-granted knowledge interacted with the shifting state of the symbiotic relationship to facilitate novel performances and specific framing. For journalists, background knowledge was catalyzed by the state of symbiosis. In the case of the Obama administration, the slowly shifting balance between the two practical logics finally enabled a move toward transparency. By overviewing these aspects of the constellation of socially thick agency, I will describe how the events constituting the legitimation process of drones were made possible.

Background Knowledge of Journalists

At the beginning of this period, journalists had become increasingly aware of the Obama administration's unyielding secrecy. Even after months of increased coverage and information contestation, the executive branch had essentially offered a series of legal arguments with few specific details. As a result, journalistic specific framing in this period was primarily the result of a strengthened logic of inquiry. In a sense, hysteresis intensified that facet of background knowledge, while weakening the restraints provided by the logic of framing. As a result, coverage became increasingly critical and at times exaggerated.[115] Rather than the previous benefit of the doubt, journalists began to exhibit a "guilty until proven innocent" logic.

In response to the Obama administration's vague and secretive framing, the logic of inquiry continued to drive journalists to seek out additional methods for attaining information. It also fostered a powerful sense that it was imperative that they bring independent scrutiny to the program. The most obvious result of this disposition appeared through the increased use of editorials and meta-commentary to call for additional critical coverage. Editors sought to appeal to the logic of inquiry by reflexively examining reporting and pointing to polls indicating that the majority of Americans still viewed drones positively.[116] This aimed to push journalists to remedy

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[114] Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

[115] This exaggeration appeared surrounding the Paul filibuster and in assumptions that the executive branch was killing civilians with far greater frequency than current estimates suggest. The Editorial Board, "The End of the Perpetual War."

[116] This also indicates the extent to which the shifting debate was the result of journalistic concerns rather than an overwhelming public opinion shift. Sullivan, "Questions on Drones, Unanswered Still."

their past inadequacy and treat drones as a subject of greater inquiry. This period's significant shifts in coverage illustrated that overt references to what it is to do journalism *were* able to help animate changes in the community's performance. This heightened disposition toward inquiry also informed this chapter's game-changing investigative pieces, which helped remedy the information gap.[117] It also underwrote journalists' mistrust of the administration's framing and continued preference for diverse information sources. Another example appeared in the decision to join the ACLU's lawsuit, which demonstrated the lengths the NYT would go to uncover the program. Finally, their direct responses to the Obama administration's legal framing displayed an effort to investigate the implications of nuanced definitions of "imminence" and "due process." This specific framing all flowed from the logic of inquiry and its strength during this period.

Another important factor for explaining journalistic coverage in this chapter was the diminished influence of constraints from the logic of framing. This component of background knowledge had previously functioned to limit aspects of specific framing and maintain objectivity. It also contributed to the disposition against publishing potentially damaging national security information. However, in this period, the NYT chose to publish information on the drone program and other classified operations that had the potential to impair the executive branch's counterterrorism efforts. These decisions bordered on a violation of the principles of democratic public engagement and even led to an article specifically defending them.[118] While this facet of background knowledge continued to limit advocacy framing in general reporting, it no longer constrained the overall tone of coverage. This facilitated an expectation that governmental framing was misleading and continued secrecy was indicative of wrongdoing. The result was a slight weakening of constraints on the tone of normal reporting and a more radical shift in editorial content. The combined effect of hysteresis and journalistic background knowledge enabled coverage that would not have been competent in earlier periods.

Background Knowledge of the Obama Administration

While the executive branch eventually engaged in unprecedented transparency during this period, its interactions generally remained constrained by the logic of secrecy. Even with the novel ability to directly discuss the program, specific information on its use remained classified.

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[117] Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will"; Mazzetti, "A Secret Deal on Drones, Sealed in Blood"; Mazzetti, Savage, and Shane, "A U.S. Citizen, in America's Cross Hairs."
[118] Shane, "Renewing a Debate Over Secrecy, and Its Costs"; Sullivan, "The Times Was Right to Report - at Last - on a Secret Drone Base."

Nevertheless, the balance of background knowledge began to shift due to a growing expectation that increased transparency was needed to pacify journalists. This was visible in more specific admissions about the program and calls for additional oversight.[119] Nevertheless, substantive information-sharing did not occur until the very end of this period. The practical logics of the executive branch did not permanently shift. Instead, a relative buildup in the expectation of a need for transparency created a disposition toward a temporary shift in the balance.[120]

The administration's logic of secrecy remained prominent even as awareness of the need for transparency grew. This was particularly visible in Carney's inability to discuss specific details of drone warfare during press briefings. As this period's primary site of framing, the adversarial setting of briefings produced an even stronger disposition to restrict information-sharing and avoid unintentional statements about the program. The sudden decline in speech-giving was also rooted in this logic and the lack of results from previous speeches. As the administration had already stated its legal case and was unable to offer greater information to justify the program, additional speeches offered little benefit.[121] As a result of these factors, the logic of secrecy significantly exacerbated journalistic perceptions of hysteresis. The influence of this facet of background knowledge was also apparent in the continued resistance of the CIA and Pentagon to reforms and the declassification of information at the end of this period.[122] The value of secrecy in maintaining national security also appeared through strategic framing emphasizing the need to protect this useful tool against Al Qaeda.[123] This bias toward the status quo played an essential role in hindering the administration's ability to respond to journalists.

The executive branch's imbalance toward secrecy began to slowly shift in this period due to recognition that the administration's framing had grown out-of-sync with the drone debate. This expectation of the need for transparency and disposition towards reform began to appear primarily through reform-based framing. As far back as June 2012, journalists reported that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton often complained about her restricted ability to rebut exaggerated claims of civilian casualties.[124] In March 2013, Eric Holder told the Senate Intelligence Committee that he was sympathetic to their desire to see documents, but could not

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[119] Once again, these admissions were relatively miniscule but were significant compared to previous framing.

[120] In another sense, the increasing awareness of the mismatch between their habitus and position led to changes. However, this argument will be outlined below.

[121] This inability to share information was due to the logic of secrecy and difficulty of declassification.

[122] These concerns were based in security and precedent-setting. Baker, "In Terror Shift, Obama Took A Long Path."

[123] Shane and Savage, "Report on Targeted Killing Whets Appetite for Less Secrecy."

[124] Shane, "Renewing a Debate Over Secrecy, and Its Costs."

make the decision himself. He added that the administration was struggling to find a way to offer more information.[125] After leaving the executive branch, Harold Koh and Jeh Johnson were able to make an even more explicit case for increased transparency through public speeches that derided unnecessary secrecy.[126] These officials all illustrated the growing awareness and influence of the logic of transparency as it informed the executive branch. Eventually, this disposition toward informing the public and better legitimating the drone program gained enough influence to push the administration toward reform. This shift in the balance of practical logics was illustrated by a senior official's statement that while "hawks" in the administration were grumbling, "no one [was] screaming."[127] This shows how the administration's balance of dispositions had transformed throughout the case. Even those who opposed reforms recognized that they would not cause the sky to fall.

The State of the Symbiotic Relationship

In the previous chapter, the breakdown of homology enabled greater criticality in journalistic coverage and provoked a series of speeches justifying drones. Nevertheless, the executive branch's response remained highly constrained by deeply embedded practices and background knowledge. As a result, this period contained greater efforts by unsatisfied journalists to gain informational and symbolic capital to contest their position within the social game of drone legitimation. This led to a growing mismatch between governmental dispositions and their position in the field. This hysteresis played a major role in enabling the aforementioned shifts in journalistic performance of inquiry and framing. In addition, that increased criticality enabled a growing governmental awareness of hysteresis and slow move toward transparency.

Fundamentally, this component of the constellation of socially thick agency had an intensifying effect on existing journalistic performance. In contrast to the inertia of homology, it created a self-reinforcing momentum in coverage. This prompted journalists to reach new levels of skepticism about the highly visible lag in the administration's engagement in the drone debate. As a result, perceptions that secrecy was masking misconduct began to gain influence. By highlighting continued secrecy through editorials and meta-commentary, the NYT attempted to foreground the Obama administration's out-of-sync performance in order to provoke a shift in

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[125] Charlie Savage, "Senators Press Holder On Use of Military Force," *New York Times*, March 7, 2013.
[126] Shane, "Ex-Lawyer in State Department Criticizes Drone Secrecy."
[127] Baker, "In Terror Shift, Obama Took A Long Path."

democratic public engagement.[128] Journalists also continued to seek alternate information sources and undertake investigative reports.[129] In addition, they fiercely argued that national security leaks were vital to counter secrecy and break stories like Abu Ghraib, CIA black sites, and the drone program.[130] At this point, journalists no longer expected trustworthy information from official administration sources. These shifts all flowed from a perception that the executive branch was not fulfilling its part of the symbiotic relationship. As journalists continued to gain informational and symbolic capital in the drone debate, this effect increased.

Hysteresis also contributed to enabling more overt advocacy in framing. As Figures 8 and 15 illustrate, discussions of secrecy and the problematic portrayal of drones became extremely common by the end of this period. Perceptions that the administration had violated the symbiotic relationship also led the NYT to publish articles on drones that might have previously been withheld for national security reasons.[131] The fact that Margaret Sullivan had publicly defend their publication indicated the extent to which hysteresis had catalyzed journalistic coverage and weakened the NYT's framing restrictions.[132] This pushed journalistic dispositions toward publishing whatever was necessary to shed light on the program. Nevertheless, these momentary violations were far outweighed by the executive branch's maladapted dispositions.

Even as the previous chapter's chorus of concerns grew into an uproar, the executive branch was slow to respond to the fact that it was no longer fulfilling its role in the symbiotic relationship. The lag between its habitus and new relative position in the social game was illustrated by statements from officials that continued to refer to previous speeches as examples of unprecedented transparency. Even in February 2013, the administration responded to questions about the white paper by directing journalists to the broad legal statements of previous speeches.[133] While speech-giving had allowed the administration to engage in the drone debate while abiding by the constraints of secrecy, it proved to be a largely inadequate response. Eventually, as the national discussion grew increasingly heated, officials started to consistently display an awareness that their response had become maladapted to the current circumstances. This appeared in references to concerns as "legitimate questions" and Obama's admission that

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[128] Sullivan, "Questions on Drones, Unanswered Still"; "Too Much Power for a President."
[129] See Figure 5's increases in the citations of all three types of sources.
[130] Sullivan, "The Danger of Suppressing the Leaks."
[131] Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test Of Obama's Principles and Will"; Sullivan, "The Times Was Right to Report - at Last - on a Secret Drone Base."
[132] Sullivan, "The Times Was Right to Report - at Last - on a Secret Drone Base."
[133] Carney, "White House Press Briefing - February 5, 2013."

the public should not "just take [his] word for it."[134] This went beyond mere public framing, as the administration "spent months discussing how to be more transparent about a program that was still officially secret." [135] This awareness of hysteresis contributed to the previously discussed shift in the executive branch's balance of practical logics. However, it did not cause a change in those practices or background knowledge. Instead, Obama's speech and policy reforms acted as a relief valve to diminish building pressure and restore symbolic capital in the drone debate. This finally pushed the administration out of hysteresis into a more acceptable symbiosis, but left drone technology with a highly negative social definition.[136]

Summary

This final chapter focused on how the executive branch's continued inability to adequately engage in the drone debate facilitated an increasingly critical and vocal response from journalists. This heightened attention finally produced a substantive move toward transparency through a major speech, reforms, and the release of previously classified information. In order to explain these shifts in specific framing, I argued that the Obama administration's imbalance toward practices and background knowledge of secrecy initially dominated their constellation of socially thick agency. At the same time, journalists continued to engage in the drone debate through an increasingly unconstrained performance of journalistic inquiry and framing. As hysteresis began to characterize the state of the symbiotic relationship, both communities' constellations shifted. This had an intensifying effect on journalistic performance that enabled more skeptical coverage. As a result, this critical mass of attention enabled a growing awareness of hysteresis and disposition toward transparency within the executive branch. Thus, as journalistic coverage of secrecy and drone use sharpened, it finally proved sufficient to provoke a move toward openness. While this shift proved temporary and the social definition of drones remained highly negative, the tension surrounding the drone debate largely dissipated.

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[134] "Watch: President Obama Answers Your Questions in a Google+ Hangout."
[135] Baker, "In Terror Shift, Obama Took A Long Path."
[136] Although the slow pace of reforms and negative public definition of drones has led skepticism to rise again, it is not near the levels of criticality produced during the period of hysteresis.

Table 4: An Overview of the Shifts in Specific Framing in Chapter Four

Obama Administration		New York Times Journalists	
Comments for New York Times Reporters	Remained common and primarily anonymous. There were some instances of rare "on the record" comments.	Use of Governmental and External Sources	A substantial increase in the use of tracking projects, experts, and legal advocates. Also featured more critical contributed pieces.
Press Briefings	Became the primary site of interaction and evasion remained common. However, Carney also began to use some reform framing.	Editorials and Meta-Commentary	A serious move to rally attention to drones. This appeared through a shift in the tone of coverage and number of editorials.
Speeches	Became far less common, although Brennan's confirmation hearing provided an additional site for framing. Obama's speech moved to vigorously defend the program, but also provided reforms and information.	Treatment of Drones as a Subject or Object	Overall coverage about drones had substantially increased and become a common topic. The amount of op-eds and depth of interest in the topic grew and treated drones as a matter of concern.
Evasion as a Frame	Still remained very common. Ambiguous language and the inability to comment were often used. Nevertheless, it was increasingly balanced by other framing.	Tone of Coverage	Drastic tonal shift toward problematizing drone warfare. This appeared openly in opinion pieces and in more subtle ways through general reporting.
Reform Framing	A new frame that embodied the move toward transparency. It admitted to the limitations of drones and need for reforms. It was increasingly common throughout this period.	Transparency Framing	Significant increases in overt calls for meaningful transparency as the debate moved to focus on secrecy itself.
Precision Framing	Remained in common use, but moved to include mentions of careful targeting after counting methods were undermined.	Obama-Focused Framing	Amplified effort to portray Obama as a hypocrite through references to being a constitutional law professor and Nobel Peace Prize winner.
Ethical Framing	Exhibited little change and continued to make broad declarations regarding American values and care in targeting.	Ethical Framing	Appearance of a debate over the ethical implications of drone technology and targeted killing.
Legal Framing	This was frequently used, but often appeared through a rehashing of previous arguments. The focus moved toward emphasizing domestic legality due to the white paper leak. Officials also began to call for a "legal architecture" to rein in drone use.	Strategic Framing	Continued acceptance of the effectiveness and precision of drones. However, investigative reporting had undermined the strength of those points. Rebuttals began to critique drones as a counterterrorism solution.
Strategic Framing	Slightly more detail was offered in claims of effectiveness due to the ability to directly comment on the program. This led to more nuanced discussions of the responsibility to respond to Al Qaeda	Legal Framing	Substantial efforts to directly rebut and discuss the administration's legal framing and definitions. Their focus moved toward constitutionality and questionable militant counting methods.
Constellation of Socially Thick Agency	While the previous period's response was heavily defined by the imbalance toward secrecy, the administration's growing awareness of hysteresis led to an increasing disposition toward transparency, ultimately appearing in Obama's speech.	Constellation of Socially Thick Agency	The unconstrained performance of the previous chapter was catalyzed by perceptions of hysteresis. This weakened the restraints of the practice of framing and led to highly skeptical coverage. This momentum eventually provoked a response from the Obama administration.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Throughout this case study, there were considerable shifts in the frames used by the Obama administration and New York Times journalists to publicly discuss drone warfare. From initial tacit acceptance of targeted strikes to referencing potential war crimes and the abuse of presidential power, the news media's specific framing made significant and important changes throughout this period. At the same time, the executive branch exhibited a level of secrecy which initially prevented serious discussion, but eventually led to a less efficacious legitimation process. When the administration was finally able to provide more transparent framing and reforms, the public image of drone technology had already been irreparably damaged. While the debate over drone warfare is far less heated today, there are still dominant public perceptions that the weapon kills inordinate amounts of civilians and violates the laws and ethics of the American population. How could the United States government, given the future utility and significant amount of resources devoted to unmanned technology, play such a restrained role in combating exaggerations and misinformation? On the other side, what allowed journalists to exhibit such a disinterest in taking drones seriously during an unprecedented expansion of their use and what enabled their near-hyperbolic coverage at the end of the case?

In this thesis, I argued that the interaction of three primary components created a socially thick agency from which communities reacted to the framing of the other group. This "strategy" was constituted by the groups' background knowledge, practices, and the state of the symbiotic relationship between the two communities. That relationship was founded on the principles of democratic public engagement and the need for a proper balance between secrecy and transparency. By tracing the shifts in specific framing throughout the case study, I was able to map key variations in the constellation informing each community's socially thick agency. In this way, I uncovered the underlying dynamics that made the previously discussed shifts possible.

From January 2009 until near the end of the case, the Obama administration's constellation remained heavily constrained by deeply embedded practices and dispositions toward secrecy. These components were allowed to dominate specific framing during initial homology, but also created a durable imbalance that outweighed the influence of a disposition toward transparency within reasonable national security constraints. When the initial period's homology and limited journalistic inquiry faded, the administration's dispositions and resulting inability to competently engage in the drone debate became increasingly apparent. This

imbalance toward secrecy seriously impaired the executive branch's capacity to adapt to more effective specific framing. As a result, increased journalistic contestation and shifting positions within the field contributed to the development of hysteresis. By the end of the case, awareness of the extent to which the administration had become maladapted helped develop a stronger disposition towards transparency which ultimately culminated in President Obama's May 23, 2013 speech.

Journalists at the New York Times followed a path that was even more directly influenced by the state of the symbiotic relationship. In the initial period, drone coverage was minimal and did not treat the program as a topic of substantial inquiry. This was the result of the inertia of homology and journalists' relative lack of informational and symbolic capital to contest their position in the social game. However, the Brennan remarks and Awlaki killing started to dissolve homology and offered a lower informational threshold for contestation. As a result, a self-reinforcing momentum appeared as constraints were removed from journalistic background knowledge and practices. This led to a shift in relative positions within the field, as journalists successfully gained symbolic and informational capital to contest the drone legitimation process. As a result of the Obama administration's continued inability to competently respond to these changes, perceptions of hysteresis increased and catalyzed existing journalistic performance. This had the effect of strengthening inquiry while diminishing constraints in framing. The final period's intense concerns and questioning over secrecy and drone warfare grew out of this shift. Eventually, journalistic pressure proved sufficient to provoke a substantive response.

By mapping these shifts in specific framing and uncovering the roles of different facets of socially thick agency in making them possible, this thesis's findings offer valuable insights into the relationship between national security journalists and the executive branch of the United States government. This research illustrates the difficulty of increasing transparency regarding covert programs, even in the face of clear public awareness and concerns. The recent leaks of classified information on National Security Agency operations by Edward Snowden offer a similar example of the effect that was examined in this case.[1] By investigating the relationship between these two communities, this thesis provides policy relevant knowledge that could be

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[1] While the cases are distinct in many ways, the Snowden leaks illustrate the continued ineffectiveness of the executive branch in justifying and legitimating programs that might be found acceptable by the public, if officials were able to be more forthright about their use or acknowledge their existence.

used to improve executive branch responses and foster journalistic framing that might bring about moves toward transparency more quickly.[2]

Another valuable finding appeared in the mapping of how new information technology and global communications capacities influenced the weapons legitimation process. The nature of secrecy and transparency are changing due to the increased ease and speed of information transmission from once-remote areas. This research illustrated how journalists used alternative sources in reaction to evasive framing and offered insights into how their practices and background knowledge shaped and limited that response. This thesis also contributed insights into the process by which the social definition of drone technology was constituted and where exaggerations or particular perceptions developed during the case. Addressing these specific concerns would be an important first step for the executive branch in attempting to improve the image of unmanned weapons technology.

Finally, this thesis made a contribution through its application of practice theory to examine signaling surrounding highly secretive information. This research also underscored the utility of practices for understanding social dynamics at the intersection of public discourse and foreign policy decision-making. Even without access to classified data on drone use or internal discussions, shifts in specific framing offered insights into the underlying mechanisms informing each community. This thesis also provides the potential for analytical generalization in examining specific framing used by other countries, international organizations, particular branches of government, or communities. By examining their signaling, scholars could shed light on the constellation of socially thick agency from which specific frames were made possible. This may offer novel insights into social dynamics and relationships between different communities of practice.

The use of drone technology as a tool in warfare is only just beginning. It is likely that the next generations of unmanned vehicles in the air, sea, and on land will exhibit far greater capabilities and the potential for use beyond asymmetric combat against an adversary without anti-air capacity. As a result, this thesis offers a valuable initial exploration of the social construction of a weapons platform that will likely be examined through strategic, legal, and ethical lenses for years to come.

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[2] Both of these are lofty goals, but awareness of the underlying social dynamics is an important first step.

Many avenues for continued research about drones exist and scholars are now beginning to examine the topic. As information on the program becomes declassified, this initial period of unmanned warfare will likely represent a topic of great interest. Nevertheless, international perceptions and the effect of drones on the populations of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia already merit greater study. The reactions and adaptations of asymmetric terrorist groups to drone technology are also a valuable avenue of research.[3] Nevertheless, it is critically important to understand the social dynamics and public perceptions of unmanned weaponry. In coming years, robotic warfare will become increasingly common and the legitimation process of autonomous technologies will play a role in shaping public perceptions. As it stands, without changes to the socially thick agency of the executive branch and national security journalists, it is likely that these technologies will continue to be viewed as the initial manifestation of the apocalyptic era of the "Terminator."

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[3] Although, gaining access to data will continue to make this work difficult.

Appendix A: Charts and Graphs

The following figures are all based on interpretive coding performed through Atlas.ti software. Appendix B will expand upon the nature of each particular code.

Figures of New York Times Coverage

Figure 4: Citations of Obama Administration Sources in New York Times Articles
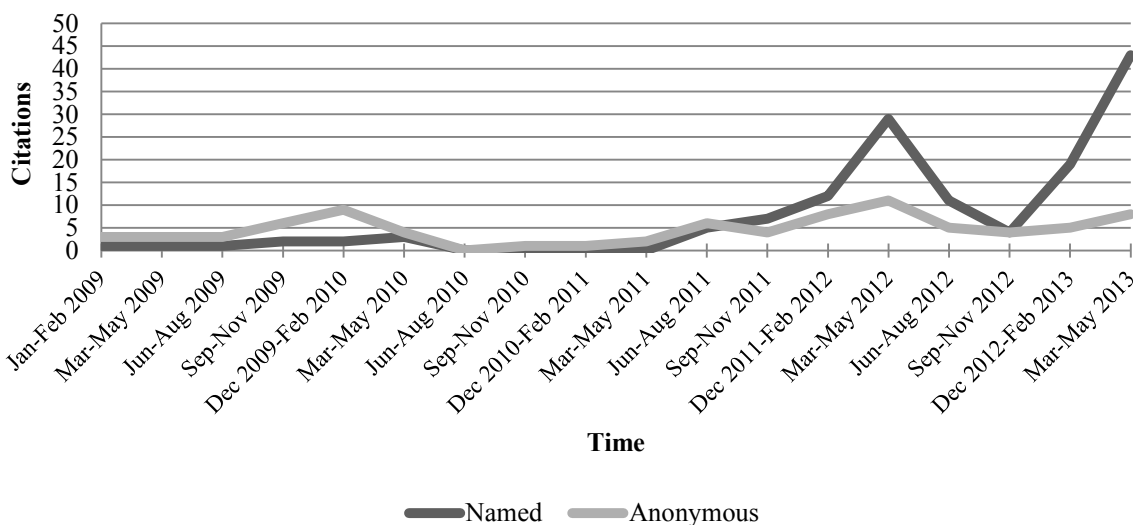
Figure 5: Citations of External Sources in New York Times Articles
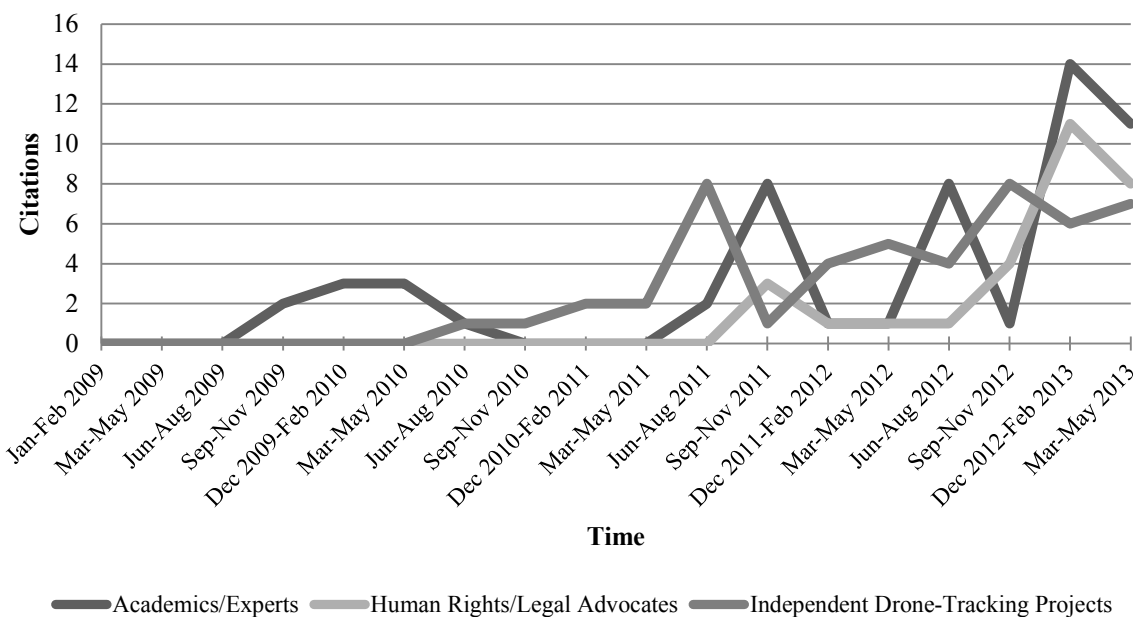
Figure 6: Treatment of Drones within New York Times Articles
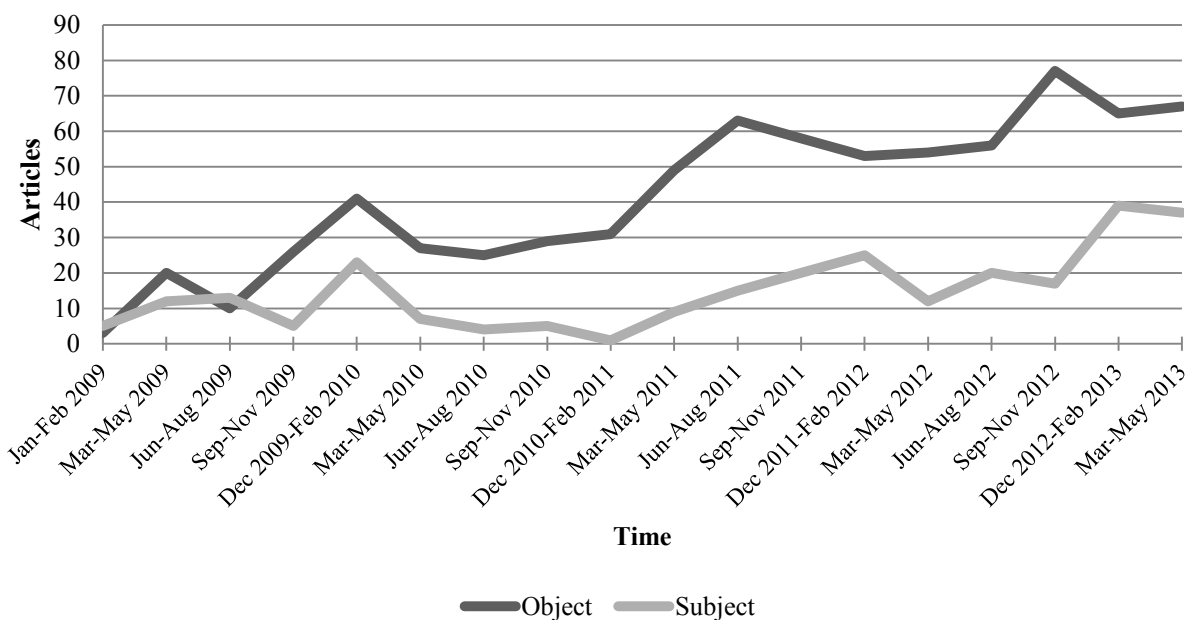
Figure 7: Total Number of Op-eds Discussing Drones
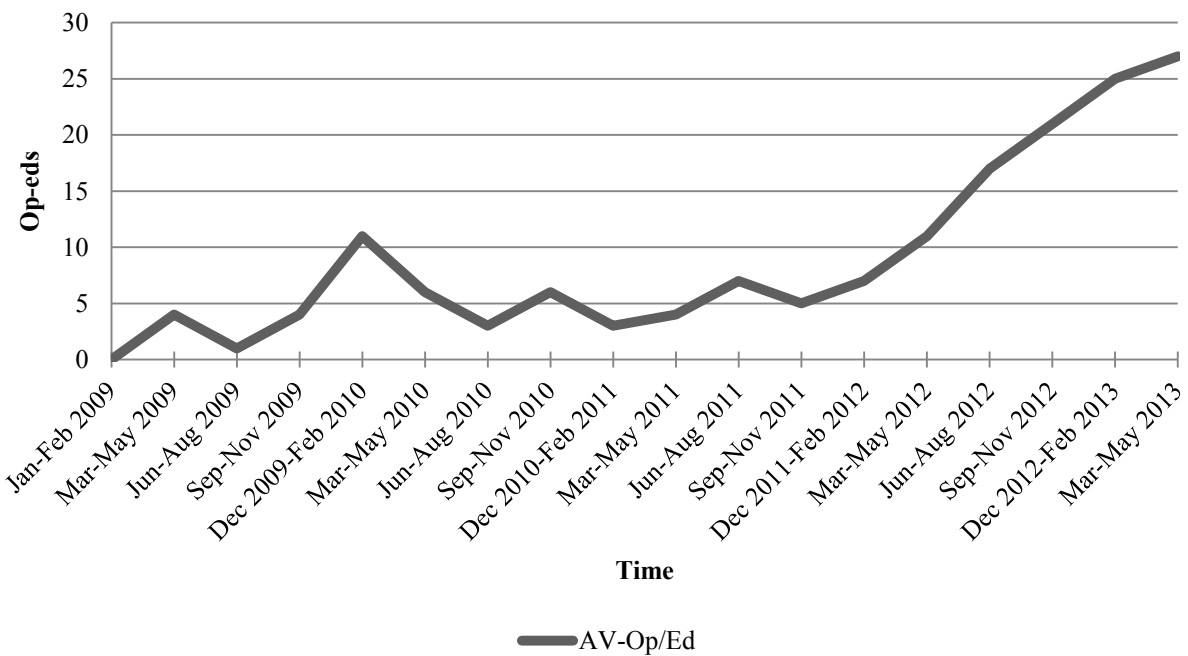
Figure 8: Overall Tone of Drone Coverage in New York Times Articles
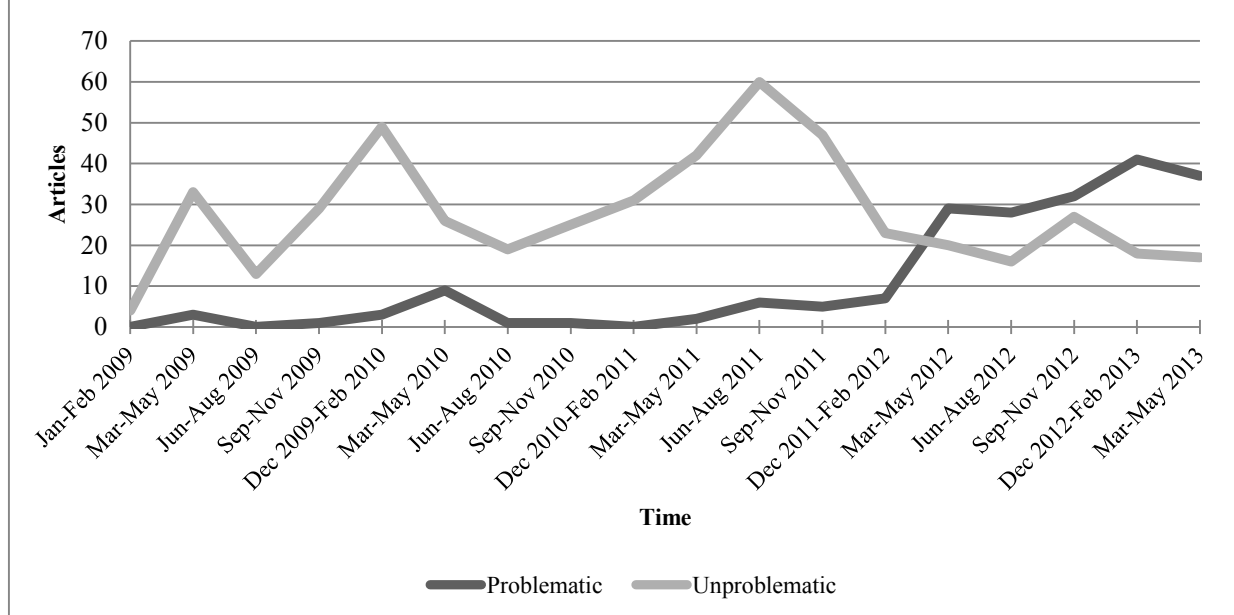
Figure 9: Instances of Strategic Framing in New York Times Articles
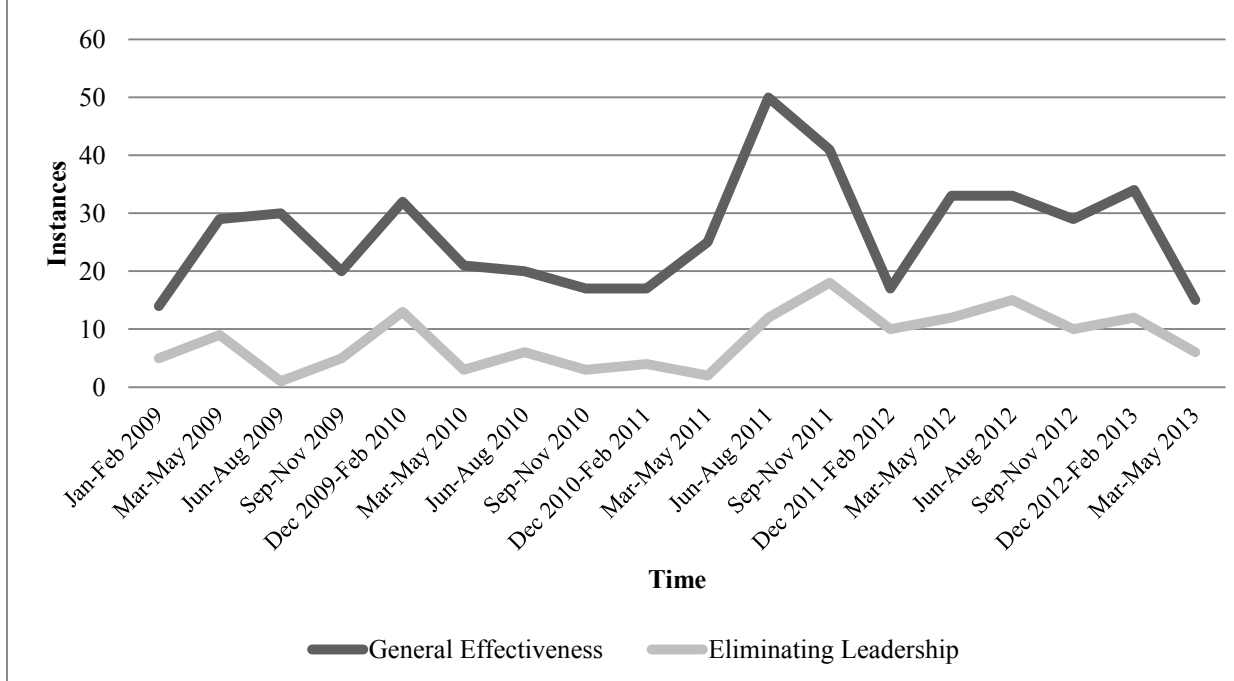
Figure 10: Instances of Precision Framing in New York Times Articles
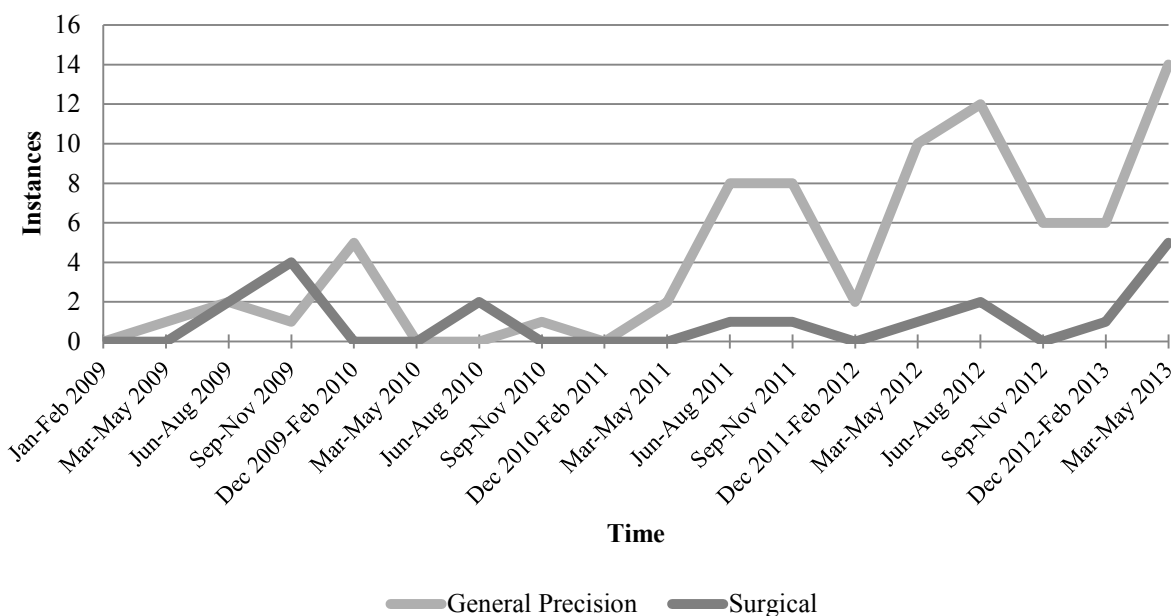
Figure 11: Pakistani Sovereignty and Counter-Framing in New York Times Articles
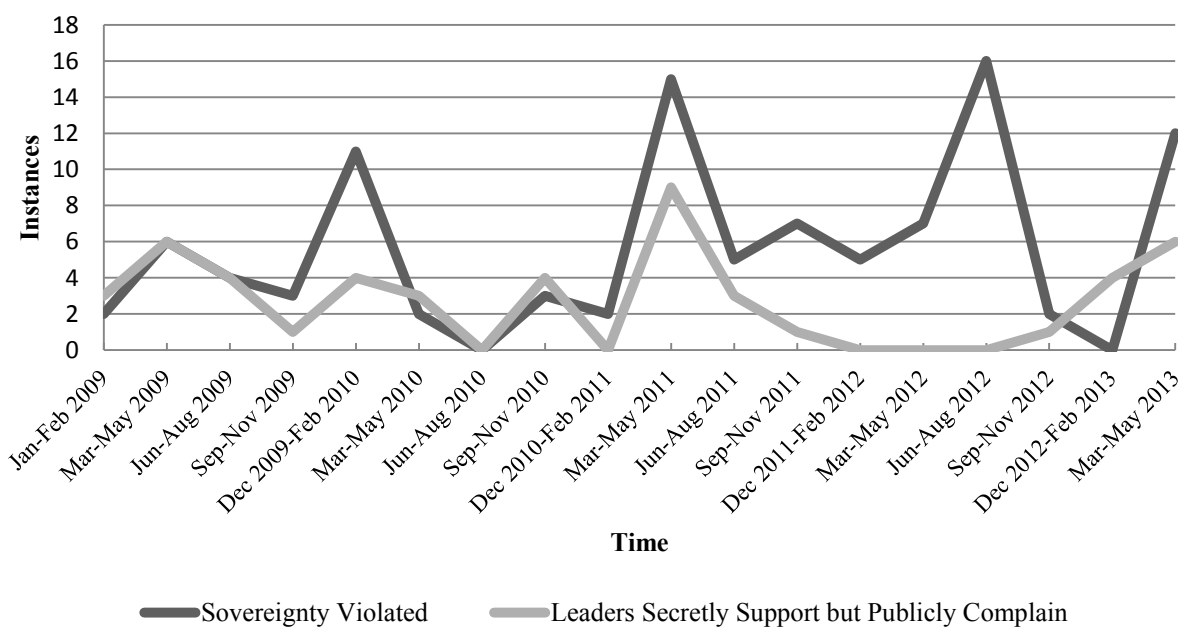
Figure 12: Instances of Legal Framing in New York Times Articles
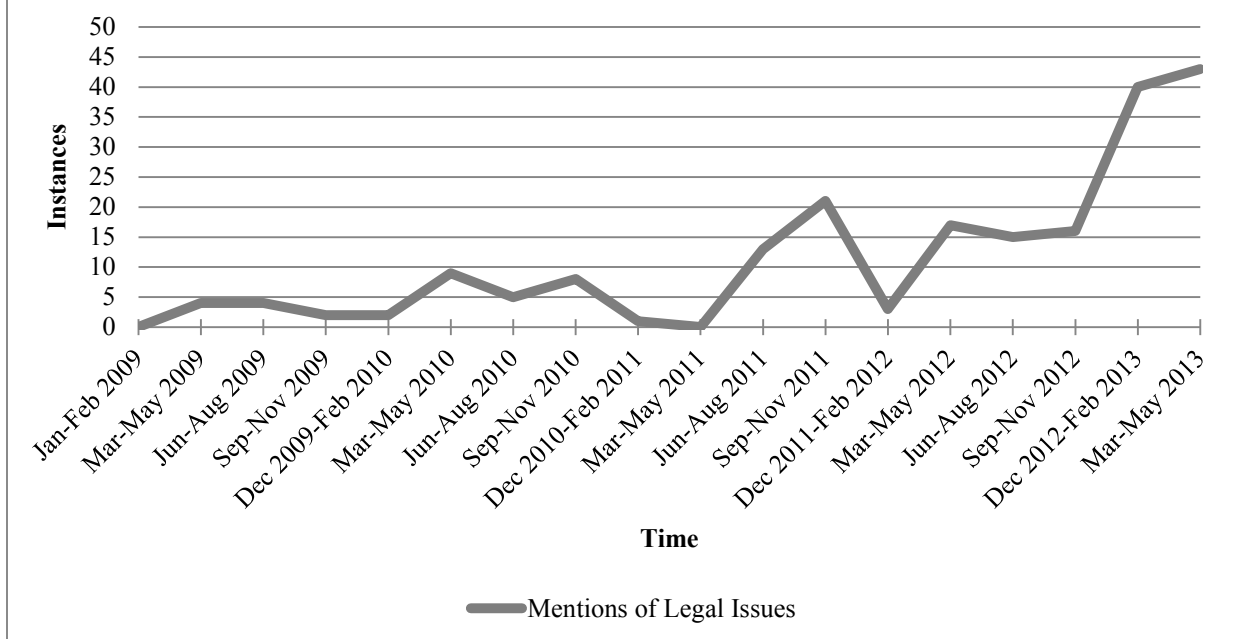
Figure 13: References to President Obama When Discussing Drones in the New York Times
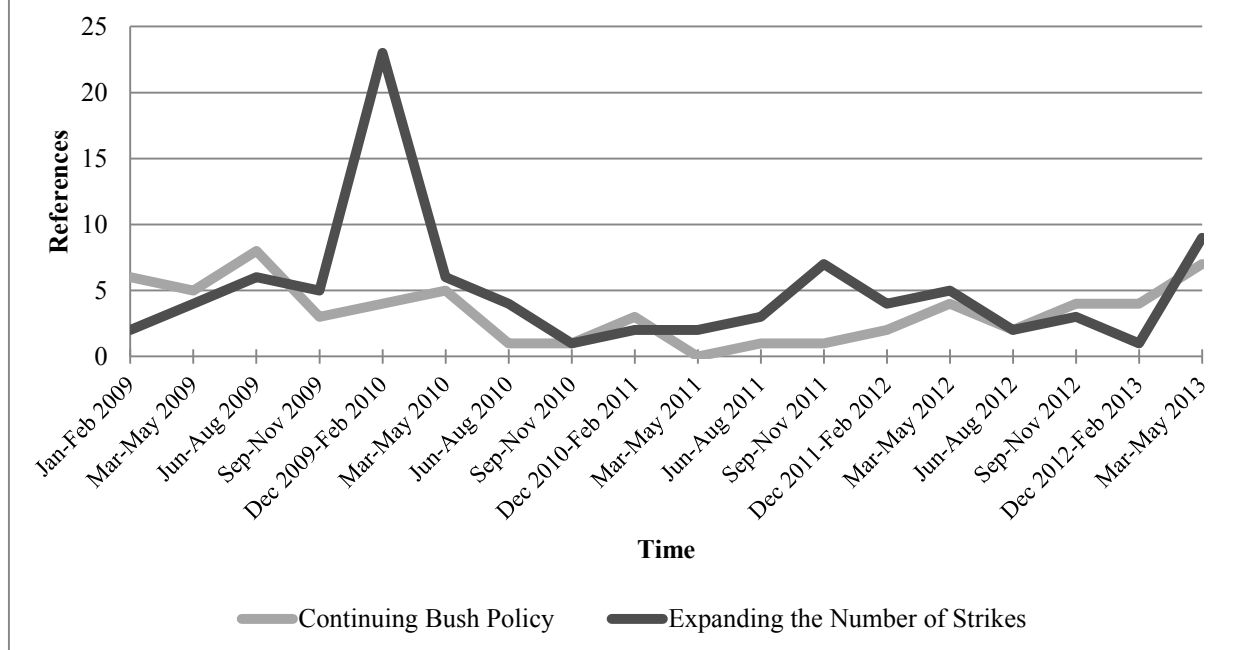
Figure 14: Use of the Term "Assassinate/Assassination" in New York Times Articles
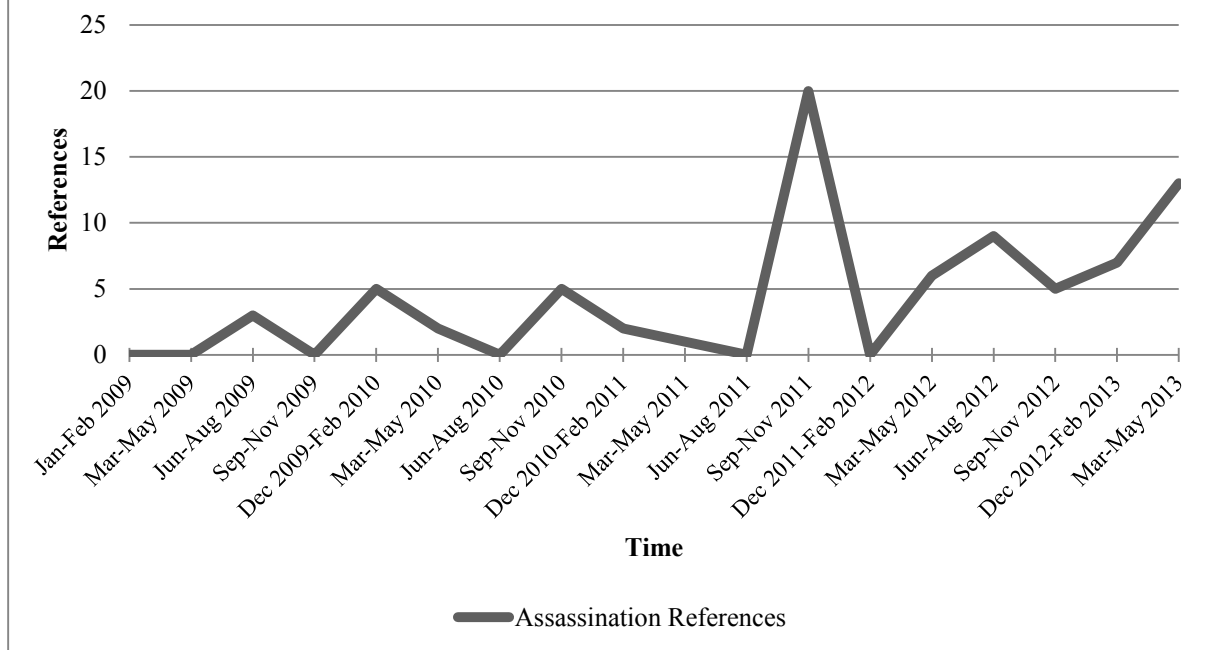
Figure 15: References to the Secrecy Surrounding Drones in the New York Times
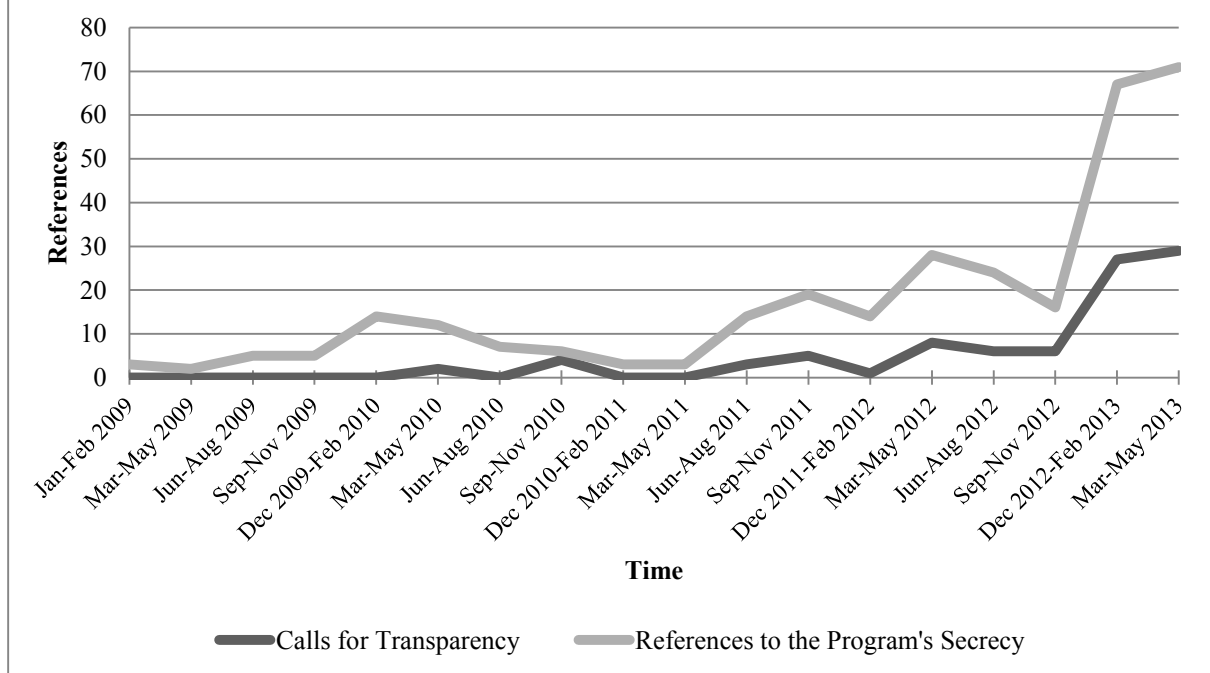
Figures of Obama Administration Speeches

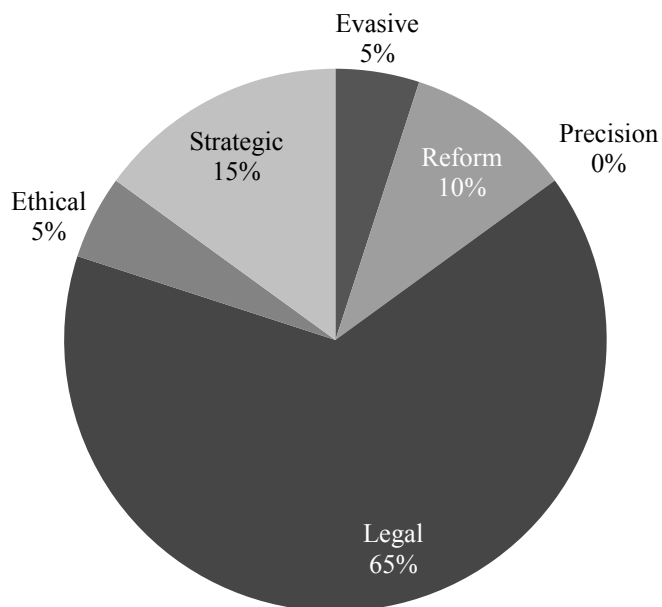Figure 16: Thematic Snapshots of Obama Administration Speeches
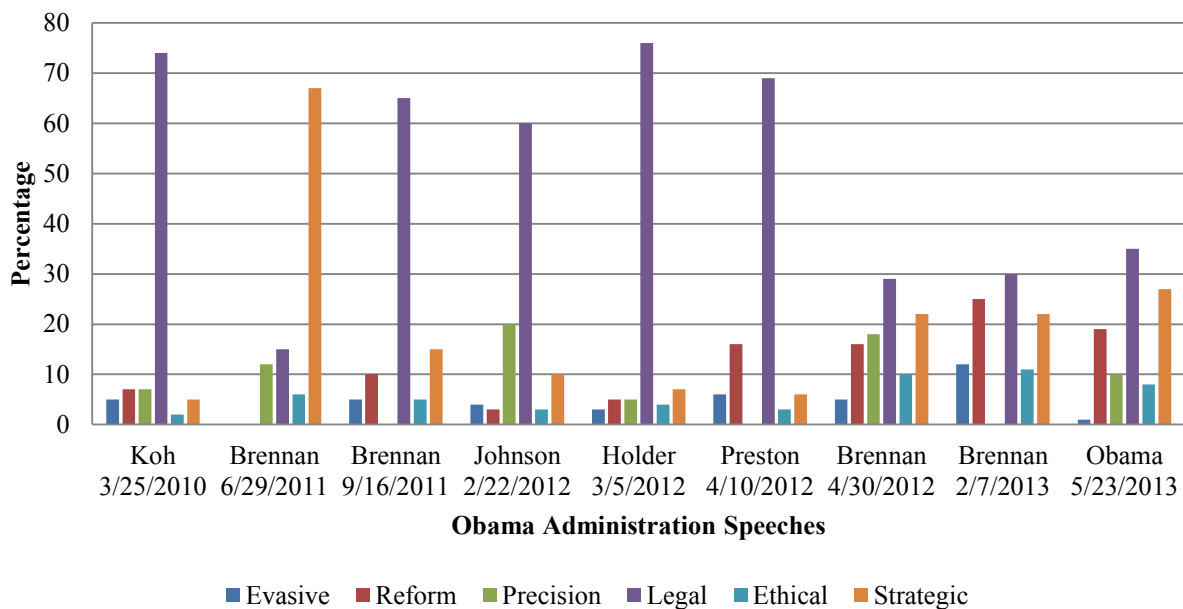
Figure 17: Harold Koh "The Obama Administration and International Law" March 25, 2010
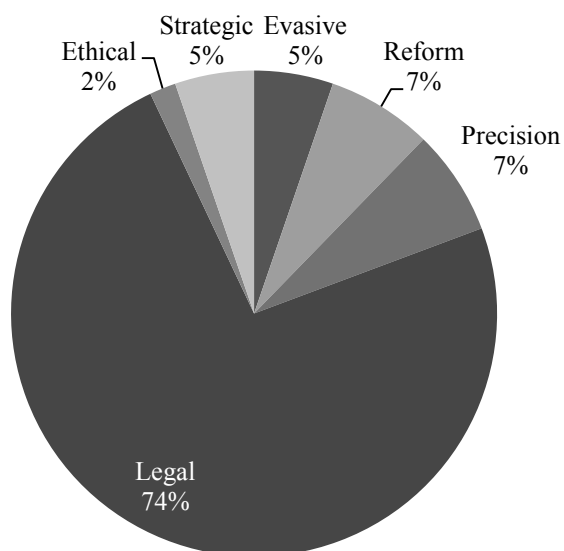
**Figure 18: John Brennan "Ensuring Al Qaeda's Demise"
June 29, 2011**
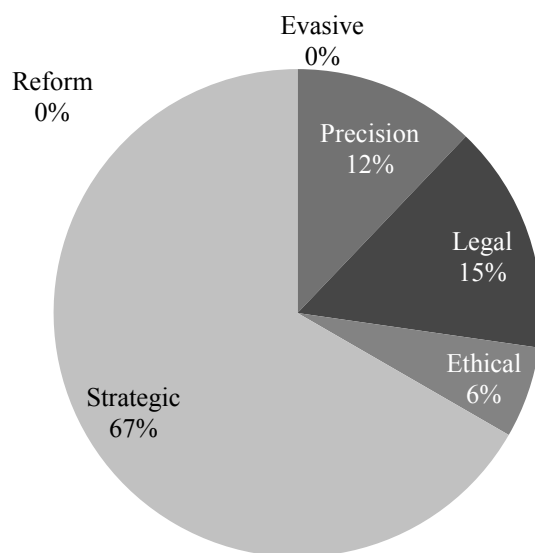
**Figure 19: John Brennan "Strengthening Our Security by
Adhering to our Values and Laws" September 16, 2011**

Figure 20: Jeh Johnson "National Security Law, Lawyers and Lawyering in the Obama Administration" February 22, 2012
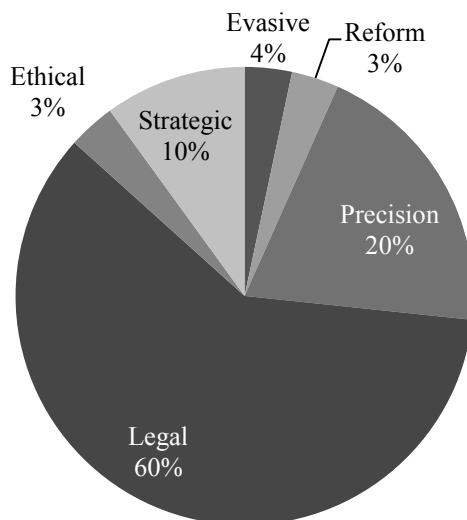

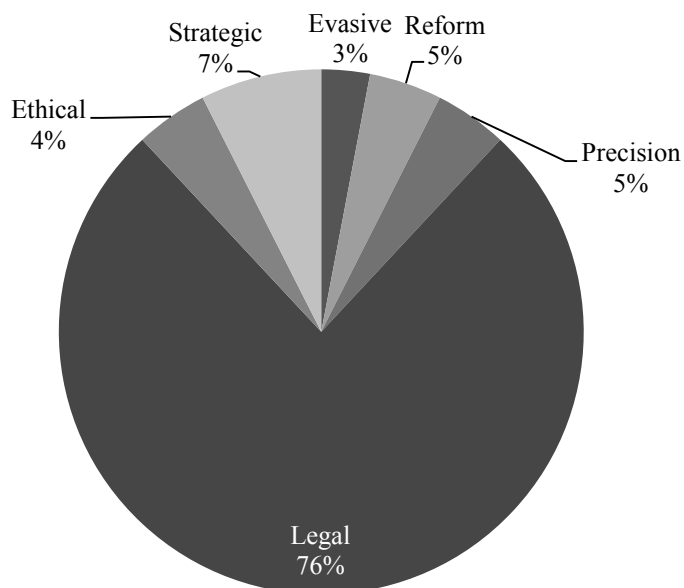Figure 21: Eric Holder "Remarks at Northwestern University School of Law" March 5, 2012

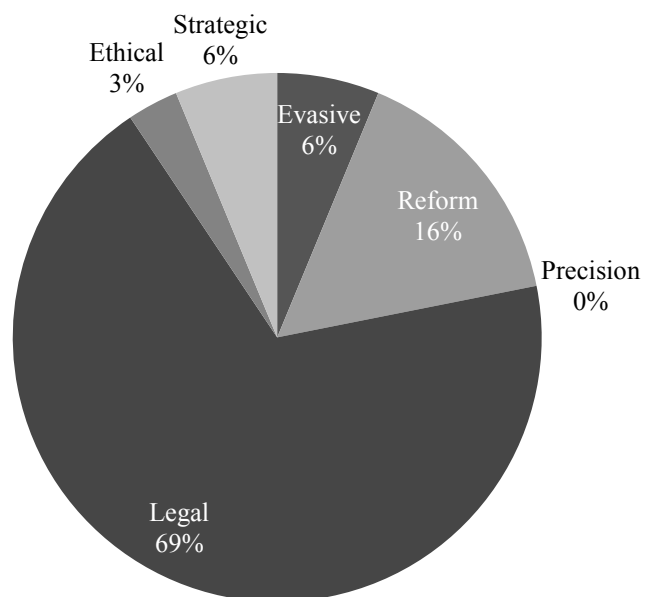**Figure 22: Stephen Preston "Remarks at Harvard Law School" April 10, 2012**

Figure 23: John Brennan "The Ethics and Efficacy of the President's Counterterrorism Strategy" April 30, 2012
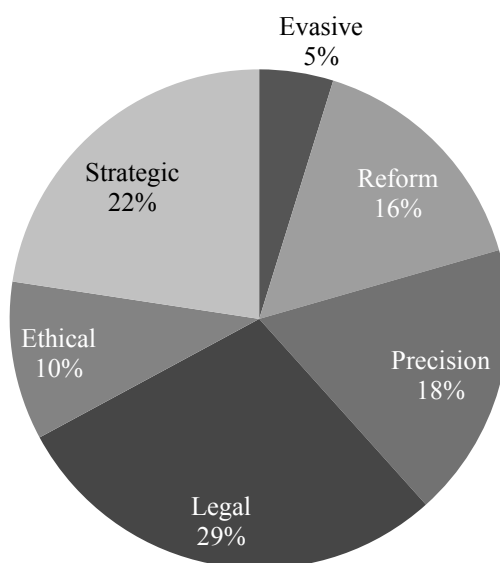
Figure 24: John Brennan "Open Hearing on the Nomination of John Brennan to be Director of Central Intelligence Agency" February 7, 2013
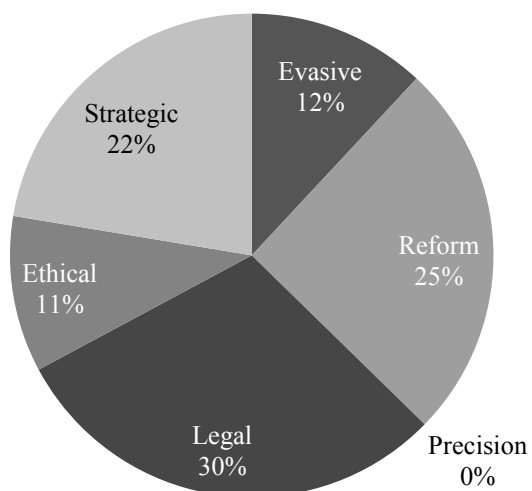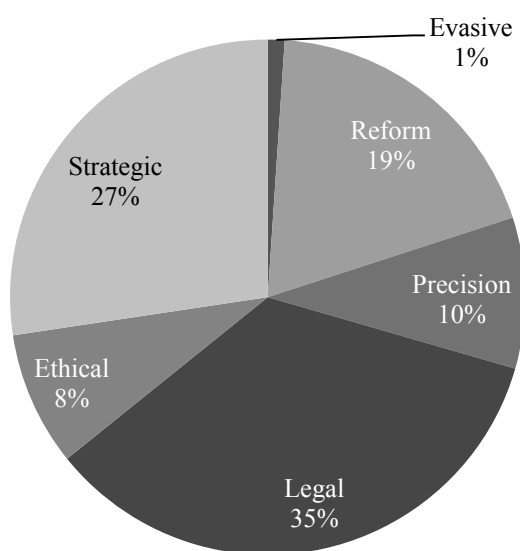

Figure 25: President Barack Obama "Remarks at the National Defense University" May 23, 2013

Appendix B: Coding Dictionary

Coding from the New York Times:

Named Officials:
This contained any quote or statement offered by a member of the executive branch of the United States Government, whether it was a spokesman for the CIA or the Attorney General. No distinction was made between quotes being repeated from speeches and original contributions.

Unnamed Officials:
This coded instances where administration officials would comment "on the condition of anonymity" as they were discussing classified intelligence or operations. It also contained references to the beliefs or opinions of unnamed officials.

Academics/Experts:
This refers to any quotation or statement from a university professor or someone who works at a think tank. This also includes those referenced as "experts" on terrorism or relevant information at a particular institution. It also contains professors of law but not lawyers outside academia.

Human Rights/Legal Advocates:
This code focused on those who work with organizations aimed at advocacy surrounding drones. In this case, it was primarily individuals from the American Civil Liberties Union, but also contained statements by Codepink, a peace activist group. It also included human rights groups and lawyers not associated with universities.

Independent Drone Tracking Projects:
This contained references to quotations or statistics from drone-tracking projects such as the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, New America Foundation, and The Long War Journal. This code focused specifically on their efforts to track the increases or changes in the use of drone strikes, rather than statements about issues in the region writ large.

Object:
This code was used for articles where drones were mentioned either briefly in relation to another issue such as Pakistani stability. It was only used once per article and aimed to mark when articles treated drones as a mere tool in counterterrorism efforts or as background information for another issue.

Subject:
In contrast to the previous article, this code sought to mark when drones were treated as the primary focus of articles. It was also only used a maximum of one time per article. This varied from articles that focused on reporting a particular strike to those which investigated and discussed the topic in depth.

Op-eds and Opinion Pieces:
This code includes all articles that are described as "Op-ed Contributors" or "Op-ed Columnists" in the section listing provided by LexisNexis. This code also included articles which were

classified as "Opinion" pieces. This was done to capture increased journalistic attention through these more advocacy-based mediums.

Problematic:
This contained articles where reporters referred to drones as ineffective, counterproductive, or in a generally problematic light. It aims to capture a negative tone throughout an article and was used once per piece. At times, it represented a negative strategic argument against targeted killing as a short-term strategy. Other times, it referred to potential blowback and how drones may make Americans less safe.

Unproblematic:
This code sought to portray a neutral consideration of drone warfare throughout an article and was only employed a maximum of once per piece. It corresponded to "matter of fact" statements of how drone technology was being used. At times, in the earlier portion of the case, it also contained articles which used a positive tone regarding the strategic value of drones. These two codes aimed to illustrate the shifting overall tone of coverage throughout the case.

General Effectiveness:
This coded instances where journalists referred to the strategic capability of drone warfare against Al Qaeda. It was coded as often as particular statements fulfilled this description and often took the form of statements regarding how the strikes were hindering Al Qaeda's global capacities or listing how many militants had been killed.

Eliminating Leadership:
This more specifically aimed to measure the amount which journalists referenced the killing of Al Qaeda's senior leadership. It was commonly referenced in relation to other statements of general effectiveness. These codes were used whenever a statement fulfilled its aims. These two codes were primarily used to demonstrate how even as drones were problematized, statements regarding their effectiveness against Al Qaeda continued to be routine.

General Precision:
This contains references to the technological capacity of drones in avoiding non-combatant casualties. It includes mentions of "precision" or "accuracy" and the ability to "pick off" Al Qaeda leaders. It functions as a count of those instances, but does not distinguish between mentions which portray that precision in positive or negative terms.

Surgical:
This code aimed to capture a subset of precision framing which used medical terminology to describe the capacity for distinction. This often took the form of referring to "surgical strikes" or using "a scalpel" rather than a hammer. These codes also sought to illustrate how perceptions of precision remained fairly constant throughout the case. These codes were used as frequently as the framing appeared.

Sovereignty Violated:
This code focused on discussions of the United States violating Pakistani sovereignty. It was coded to included statements that implied the violation through voicing how the US did not

consult with Pakistan, but also statements by Pakistanis regarding the infringement of their sovereignty. It was used as frequently as those statements occurred.

Leaders Secretly Support but Publicly Complain:
This counter-frame was used by journalists to blunt concerns of Pakistani sovereignty by pointing out the duplicitous nature of Pakistani leaders who supported the strikes in secret, while publicly complaining. It also included mentions that only focused on how they had secretly agreed to the strikes. This frame frequently accompanied the previous code in portions of this case. It was coded as frequently as it appeared within articles.

Mentions of Legal Issues:
This code sought to measure either overt or implicit references to the legal issues surrounding drone warfare. This includes topics like the American ban on assassination or descriptions of the case for self-defense under international law. It includes discussions of both domestic and international legal issues and contains both negative and positive perspectives of legality. It serves to illustrate the increasing legalization of the debate as legal framing increased. It was used as frequently as there were statements that fulfilled those characteristics.

Continuing Bush Policy:
This code focused on references to President Obama's use of drone warfare in light of President Bush's drone policy. This often appeared in the initial portion of the case to point out how he was continuing this inherited program. However, by the end of the case, these references began to illustrate a more negative tone as they outlined how Obama's use had far outweighed that of Bush. This code was used as frequently as those statements occurred.

Expanding the Number of Strikes:
Mentions of Obama's expansion of the drone program were coded to show coverage of the numerical shifts in frequency of strikes. This code contained any statement regarding the increased use of drones with reference to Obama and was used as frequently as those instances occurred. The tone of these statements also shifted from neutral to problematic throughout the case. Nevertheless, this does illustrate journalistic coverage of increases in the quantity of strikes.

Assassination References:
This code measured the number of direct references to "assassination" or the verb "assassinate" to describe targeted killing and drone strikes. This was recorded as frequently as the term occurred and aimed to capture the use of a loaded word to describe the program. It carries significant legal and moral implications.

Calls for Transparency:
This contains instances when journalists overtly or implicitly called for increased transparency surrounding the use of drones. It often appeared as statements that the US should "finally acknowledge" the program or statements that journalists must "shed light" on drone use. It was coded as frequently as these references occurred.

References to the Program's Secrecy:
This code contained statements regarding the secrecy of the drone program. This often took the form of administration officials declining to comment or journalists describing the classified nature of drone use. This was coded as often as those references occurred. This aimed to illustrate the increasing focus on secrecy itself in the latter portion of the case.

Coding from Obama Administration Documents/Statements:
Evasive:
This thematic category was used to capture the evasive language used to avoid admitting to the use of drones. This category was created by combining codes which fit into this theme. This included overt statements of the limits of what the official could say, but also more vague language like "lethal operations" or the use of force "outside hot battlefields." Other times, the official would state the importance of secrecy for the operations of the CIA. These codes combined to offer a sense of the comparative portion of the speech devoted to evasion. Nevertheless, this thematic framing was more common in press briefings than speeches.

Reform:
This theme represented the administration's efforts to admit details about the program, whether it was the limitations of drones or the need for reforms. This also appeared through the direct use of the term "unmanned aerial vehicle" and statements that the drone program was less concerning in practice than people think. Other instances were through mentions of the deep debate within the administration over drone use or statements that the public deserves to be reassured regarding the conduct of covert programs. This notion that the administration needed to do more to share information appeared more heavily in later speeches as the thematic focus of speeches diversified.

Precision:
This category embodied the use of precision framing and discussions regarding the technological capacity for drone strikes to be discriminate. This often appeared through overt statements of precision or the "surgical" nature of the strikes. It also occurred through mentions of the extent to which the executive branch works to minimize civilian casualties. It also appeared through more evasive statements of the benefits of technologically advanced platforms used in counterterrorism efforts. This framing was frequently deployed in particular speeches to emphasize the program's legality.

Legal:
Throughout the case, this thematic frame was extremely common in speeches. It often appeared through very specific wording choices that referenced categories of international law. This included references to "imminence" of the threat, "distinction" in targeting, or the organization of the enemy that is "directly participating in hostilities." It also appeared in broad statements of the program's legality and references to the targeting and killing of Admiral Yamamoto in World War II. Domestic legality also appeared through references to the Authorization for Use of Military Force and constitutionality of the program. This type of framing was highly specific in legal terminology but vague in the details supporting those nuanced claims.

Ethical:
This category was less common than others, but still appeared throughout many speeches. It took the form of references to the deliberate and careful targeting process or the "just" use of force. It also appeared through broad declarations that counterterrorism programs abide by the ethics and values of the American people. Statements that the United States abided by human rights also reinforced this thematic category.

Strategic:
This facet of framing was very common throughout the Obama administration's speeches. It appeared through statements about the "pressure" being put on Al Qaeda and how targeted killings offered an alternative to ground forces. It also took the shape of discussions of the need to "deny a safe haven" and bring the fight to Al Qaeda wherever they reside. Another common statement by administration officials was to point out how their leadership had been decimated by drone strikes. This emphasis on the effectiveness of targeted killing in the fight against Al Qaeda appeared frequently throughout the case.

Appendix C: Source Repository

Journalistic Sources
Search Query:
(drone* AND NOT immigration AND NOT israel AND NOT droney AND NOT droned AND NOT wildlife) and Date(geq(01/01/2009) and leq(05/31/2013)

These qualifiers were added to prevent the inclusion of articles about drones which did not pertain to the case study. "Droned" added many documents discussing how "someone droned on about the topic." Israel, immigration, and wildlife were included to avoid stories outside the case's area of focus. Droney was a last name that was featured in many articles about a court case.

Subject Filters:

International Relations & National Security	Taliban
National Security & Foreign Relations	Editorials & Opinions
Government Bodies & Offices	Al-Qaeda
National Security	International Relations
Government Departments & Authorities	Intelligence Services
Human Rights	Weapons & Arms
Human Rights Violations	Espionage
Terrorism & Counterterrorism	Military Operations
Terrorism	Counterterrorism
War & Conflict	International Law
Terrorist Organizations	Foreign Policy
Violence & Society	Foreign Relations
Bombings	International Organizations & Bodies
Armed Forces	War on Terror
US Presidents	United Nations Institutions
Law & Legal System	Assassination

These were selected based upon their potential relevance to the case. Those that were excluded were either irrelevant, demonstrated overlap, or lacked sources. Regardless, the sample of 1489 documents provided plenty of source material.

For access to the complete list of New York Times articles used for coding please visit: http://seanandersonmathesis.wordpress.com/

Executive Branch Sources
Statements by Obama administration officials from New York Times articles were also used to illustrate the executive branch's framing.

2009-09-23 White House Press Briefing

2009-10-05 White House Press Briefing

2010-03-25 Harold Koh Speech, "The Obama Administration and International Law"

2011-06-20 White House Press Briefing

2011-06-29 John Brennan Speech, "Ensuring al-Qaida's Demise"

2011-07-29 White House Press Briefing

2011-09-16 John Brennan Speech, "Strengthening our Security by Adhering to our Values and Laws."

2011-09-30 White House Press Briefing

2011-12-12 Joint Press Conference with President Obama and Prime Minister al-Maliki of Iraq

2012-01-31 White House Press Briefing

2012-02-22 Jeh Johnson Speech, "National Security Law, Lawyers and Lawyering in the Obama Administration"

2012-03-05 Eric Holder Speaks at Northwestern University School of Law

2012-03-19 White House Press Briefing

2012-03-27 White House Press Briefing

2012-03-27 White House Press Briefing with Ben Rhodes, and Shawn Gallagher

2012-04-10 CIA General Counsel Stephen W. Preston Speech at Harvard Law

2012-04-30 John Brennan Speech, "The Ethics and Efficacy of the President's Counterterrorism Strategy"

2012-05-29 White House Press Briefing

2012-12-04 White House Press Briefing

2013-01-08 White House Press Briefing

2013-01-22 White House Press Briefing

2013-02-05 White House Press Briefing

2013-02-06 White House Press Briefing

2013-02-07 Open Hearing on the Nomination of John Brennan to be Director of Central Intelligence Agency – United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

2013-02-07 White House Press Briefing

2013-02-13 White House Press Briefing

2013-03-04 White House Press Briefing

2013-03-07 White House Press Briefing

2013-03-15 White House Press Gaggle

2013-04-11 White House Press Briefing

2013-04-15 White House Press Briefing

2013-05-14 White House Press Briefing

2013-05-21 White House Press Briefing

2013-05-22 White House Press Briefing

2013-05-23 President Obama Speech at the National Defense University

2013-05-23 Background Briefing by Senior Administration Officials on the President's Speech on Counterterrorism

2013-05-23 U.S. Policy Standards and Procedures for the Use of Force in Counterterrorism Operations outside the United States and Areas of Active Hostilities

2013-05-29 White House Press Briefing

2013-05-30 White House Press Gaggle

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