Recently, the topic of drone warfare has been everywhere, and it's easy to see why. The use of drones evokes questions about a number of core American values: privacy, justice, rule of law, safety, and liberty. As drones implicate each of these areas, they are of interest to a number of constituencies who would not necessarily pay attention to the ethics of weapons systems.

The debate is made particularly interesting because advocates and detractors of drones alike agree that we face an increasingly uncertain world, where stateless entities (such as terror groups) can take advantage of lawless (or nearly lawless) regions to plan unconventional attacks against global targets. Traditional methods of keeping the public safe, many argue, are not quite up to the task of policing these unique challenges and, as a result, we need to figure out a novel strategy. Advocates of the resolution,

Resolved: The benefits of American drone strikes against foreign targets outweigh the harms,

Argue that drones are our best chance to keep the public safe from these threats. Detractors caution that acceptance of drone strikes against foreign targets means acceptance of a new, unregulated form of warfare that endangers international norms necessary for ethical combat.

Today, we'll discuss the arguments in favor of drone strikes against foreign targets. The first, perhaps most general, argument is that:

The U.S. electorate is mostly in favor of drone strikes. Sides argues,

Sides, 2013 ["Most Americans approve of foreign drone strikes," John, Contributor to Washington Post Wonkblog, March 10]

But, as Dylan noted in his FAQ, the main targets of drones have been mostly foreigners living in countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen. The irony, given all the attention and some plaudits given to Paul's filibuster, is that **most Americans support the use of drones to fight terrorists abroad**. While Paul inveighed against a hypothetical killing, **the actual killings that do happen are not that controversial in the minds of most Americans**. An open question, however, is whether their minds could be changed. **Only last month, the Pew Center asked a random sample of Americans whether they supported "the United States conducting missile strikes from pilotless aircraft called drones to target extremists in countries such as Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia?" A majority, 56 percent, approved** while 26 percent disapproved and 18 percent were not sure — numbers similar to two 2012 polls. In fact, **drone strikes attracted roughly similar amounts of support from across the partisan spectrum: 68 percent of Republicans approved, as did 58 percent of Democrats and 51 percent of independents. A pattern of relative bipartisanship is not all that common in public opinion today, but it is predictable in this case. When leaders in the two parties don't really disagree on something, there is no reason for partisans in the public to disagree either**. In John Zaller's magisterial account of how public opinion is formed and evolves, he refers to a pattern of bipartisanship like this one as a "mainstream effect." Like it or not, **drone warfare has become so common that "mainstream" does not sound inapt. Thus, there is little reason to expect public opinion about the drone program to change without concerted and prolonged dissent from political leaders. That does not seem to be forthcoming**. Paul's dissent — which didn't even emphasize foreign targets of American drones — was met with harsh rebuttals from Lindsay Graham, John McCain and the Wall Street Journal editorial page. Democrats were not exactly rushing to stand with Paul either.

Now, on-face this seems as though it shouldn't matter. Just because a majority of Americans are in favor of a given course of action, that doesn't mean that it's a good idea. That said, Sides argues that drones are one of the few areas of agreement among an increasingly polarized American public.

Any alternative to drones (indefinite detention, capture, or others to be discussed further down) would not likely enjoy the same amount of support and could ignite partisan infighting. That, combined with an increasingly gridlocked Congress, could spell bad news. Although we don't generally encourage adapting policy arguments for use in public forum, it could be interesting and strategic to build a contention on the potential effects eliminating drones would have in the political process, including bills currently under consideration.

In addition, many advocates of drones argue that drones are the best possible option **because they have certain unique characteristics that facilitate safety, precision, and planning.** Etzioni explains,

Etzioni, 2013 ["Everything Libertarians and Liberals Get Wrong About Drones," Amitai, professor of international relations at The George Washington University, The Atlantic, April 30.]
Most important, **critics** often **conflate two distinct issues: Should we kill terrorists that cannot be captured and -- should drones be employed**? I contend that **once one agrees that kill we must, critics should acknowledge that drones are the much-preferred tool of warfare**. **Unlike cruise missiles and bombs (which, by the way, when first used faced the same criticism as drones), unpiloted aviation systems allow for long and careful surveillance** before a strike. **By using drones, one can wait until the children are away from the area, allow both multiple layers of command and lawyers time to review the life feed, and take other measures necessary for minimizing collateral damage**. As true as that may be in theory, the **critics reply, in practice the use of drones has been reckless** and caused significant collateral damage. **However, it is difficult to reach conclusive judgments, as neither critics nor proponents of drones are actually there to observe the effects** of drone strikes. Instead, **we often have to rely upon reports from locals, who are notoriously unreliable. Contrary to these claims, the military insists that they take all possible precautions, and those on the front lines report that that the review process is rigorous to the point of causing delays that have allowed terrorists to escape**. Moreover, **even if these claims are true, drones at least have the potential of being carefully reviewed**; this cannot be stated about other means of warfare.

A few arguments here:

1. He makes a framing argument that the debate about drones should be comparative. That is, every argument against drones should be compared to possible alternatives to drones. Given that most analysts agree that allowing terrorist groups to operate with impunity is a bad idea, the question is the best method to prevent terrorism. You can use this as a framework argument to force the con to defend another way of dealing with terrorism.
2. Drones have a distinct advantage. Drones allow pre-strike surveillance for as long as needed to review the legality, practicality, and potential collateral damage of a strike. This potentially prevents breaches of international law as well as collateral damage.

Zenko elaborates,

Zenko, 2013 ["Reforming U.S. Drone Strike Policies," Micah, Douglas Dillon Fellow in the Center for Preventive Action (CPA) at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Council Special Report No. 65, January.]
The U.S. use of armed drones has two unique advantages over manned aircraft, distant missile strikes, and special operations raids when it comes to destroying targets. First, **drones allow for sustained persistence over potential targets. The existing U.S. arsenal of armed drones—primarily the Predator and Reaper—can remain aloft, fully loaded with munitions, for over fourteen hours, compared to four hours or less for F-16 fighter jets** and A-10 ground attack aircraft.5 And **unlike manned aircraft or raids, drones fly directly over hostile territory without placing pilots or ground troops at risk of injury, capture, or death**.

While re-iterating Etzioni's "timing" argument, he also mentions the advantage of keeping U.S. troops out of harm's way. Drones, unlike piloted aircrafts, do not require the operator to be inside the aircraft. Therefore, if they are shot down or otherwise endangered, the operators will remain unharmed.

U.S. troop casualties are bad for a number of reasons: the obvious, of course, is that whenever U.S. soldiers die, it's a tragic, unacceptable loss. The less obvious reason is that, if those troops are dying for no reason (that is, alternatives exist), public support for the effort to end terrorism could erode. In a democracy, that could add up to overwhelming pressure to draw down forces, even when we all potentially agree that a response to terrorism is needed.

Zenko continues,

Zenko, 2013 ["Reforming U.S. Drone Strike Policies," Micah, Douglas Dillon Fellow in the Center for Preventive Action (CPA) at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Council Special Report No. 65, January.]
Second, **drones provide a near-instantaneous responsiveness— dramatically shrinking what U.S. military targeting experts call the "find-fix-finish" loop**—that most other platforms lack. **For example, a drone-fired missile travels faster than the speed of sound, striking a target within seconds—often before it is heard by people on the ground. This ability stands in stark contrast to the August 1998 cruise missile salvo targeting Osama bin Laden, which had to be programmed based on projections of where he would be in four to six hours, to allow time to analyze the intelligence, obtain presidential authorization, program the missiles, and fly them to the target**.6 **Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) loaded with conventional munitions can reach distant targets much faster than cruise missiles, but they carry the dire risk of misattribution as a U.S. nuclear first strike against Russia or China, for instance. Finally, drone-fired missiles can be**—and have been—**diverted at the last moment if noncombatants enter the likely blast radius**.7

Zenko points out that drones allow plenty of time for a decision to strike to be made; they also have other timing-related advantaged. Once a strike is authorized, a drone can strike quickly and precisely at a location and an operator can monitor that location up until the moment of impact. They can even be diverted if civilian casualties are likely. These advantages not only prevent civilian casualties but can increase accuracy. Thus, whether the goal is to be sure we've killed a terrorist or to avoid collateral damage, drones have unique features facilitate both.

A common thread of many of these arguments, which we will now address explicitly, is that **drones are better than all possible alternatives**. Savage quotes an Air Force Colonel, who argues,

Savage, 2013 ["Drone Strikes Turn Allies Into Enemies, Yemeni Says," Charlie, Contributor at New York Times, April 23.]
Retired **Col. Martha McSally of the Air Force said that drones offered more "oversight and precision" because they could hover over a target**, with the ability to abort a strike until the last second, and with the "chain of command" and lawyers watching. **She also said that even when it appeared possible to arrest someone rather than killing him, there were risks of civilian casualties in "capture missions," too. Such operations also take longer to plan, and create the risk that an American commando might be killed or captured, she said**. The use of drone strikes has grown enormously over the past decade with relatively scant public policy discussion, but it has recently received greater attention, including a push by Congress to obtain access to secret Obama administration legal memos on targeted killings.

Here, she compares drones to another popular alternative: capture missions. Capture missions have become popular recently because they allow us to apprehend terror suspects alive. Not only does this mean we would not have to kill them out of hand (allowing for due process to decide of their crimes warrant it) but also allows us to interrogate them.

She cautions that these missions are not always feasible (terrain or other factors may prevent putting soldiers on the ground) but also that they are dangerous – which circles back to the U.S. troop casualties question. Etzioni adds,

Etzioni, 2013 ["Everything Libertarians and Liberals Get Wrong About Drones," Amitai, professor of international relations at The George Washington University, The Atlantic, April 30.]
Even more telling is the fact that many of those for whom there is reliable evidence of engagement in terrorism-related activities are located in places such as North Waziristan. In other words, **these terrorists are in areas where they cannot be captured -- which of course is necessary for them to hauled before an American court -- without imposing very great risks on our troops, invading other countries, and risking considerable collateral damage. Do the critics really mean to suggest that if these suspects cannot be captured, they should be granted a free pass**? If not, how do these critics suggest we deal with them?

An additional layer is that, if capture is the only option, and capture is impossible, then without drones we will be forced to allow terrorists to operate freely in areas that impede troop access. This solution is a distasteful one. USA Today adds,

USA Today, 2013 ["Drones beat the alternatives: Our view," February 7.]
But for all the controversy, the **drone attacks** have this going for them: They **are effective, and the other options are worse**. President Obama has dramatically expanded the use of drones, ordering more than 360 strikes, up from roughly 50 during the Bush administration. **These strikes have significantly weakened al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The administration is following a similar model by intensifying drone attacks against al-Qaeda offshoots in Yemen and Somalia. This is messy. But what are the other options? Leave terrorists alone, free to operate from havens abroad? The foolishness of that approach was exposed by the 9/11 attacks, planned at well-known al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan. Use American ground troops to root them out? The price is needless casualties, higher risk of failure and equal likelihood of alienating local populations. Employ conventional airstrikes? These are less precise and far more dangerous to foreign civilians. Although drones kill civilians, the**

"collateral damage" rate has dropped from more than 50% during the Bush administration to about 10% now, according to the New America Foundation.

Here the author argues that the "leave terrorists alone" approach has empirically had bad consequences, including the 9/11 attacks. In that case, USA Today alleges that we knew the location of terrorist activity but, fearing logistical hurdles and casualties, chose not to engage. Drones alleviate these considerations and allow us to respond to threats in dynamic environments where troops would be in unacceptable danger. Fair continues,

Fair, 2013 ["For Now, Drones Are the Best Option," C. Christine, assistant professor at Georgetown University's Center for Peace and Security Studies, New York Times, January 29.]
But we can conclude for several reasons that drones are the best alternative, once the United States (with the collusion of Pakistan agencies in many cases) **decides that a person is to be killed. The tribal areas are governed by the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation rather than Pakistan's constitution. Because of this, there are no police forces** in the area, **but rather militias, paramilitary and military forces. Americans could not therefore detain suspects without ground operations. Alternatives are more deadly and devastating: Pakistani military operations, which are not precise and have displaced up to 4 million people, devastate infrastructure and displace whole communities**. **And while Pakistan helps the United States in some operations it undermines the United States in others**. For this reason, the United States cannot simply outsource such an assignment to Pakistan because **there have been too many cases where the Pakistanis have alerted the targets in advance. Drones may not be desirable but they are the best option at least in the tribal areas**.

These considerations are unique and the pro should press the con to account for them. Many who advocate against drone warfare assume conditions where alternative operations could easily replace drone strikes. By playing up the real logistical constraints, the pro has a strong argument that, although there are harms, the benefits outweigh them.

Another potential benefit of drones is that they cut off the option of giving terrorists access to the U.S. judicial system via trial. Although the con may argue that this is a bad thing, Etzioni cautions that giving terrorists access to U.S. courts can have serious consequences:

Etzioni, 2013 ["Everything Libertarians and Liberals Get Wrong About Drones," Amitai, professor of international relations at The George Washington University, The Atlantic, April 30.]
Critics reveal their true colors when they argue that terrorists should be tried like other criminals, i.e., in civilian courts in the United States. **This claim ignores a major question: Why should suspects in Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia be granted all the rights of an American citizen -- including the services of a bunch of publicity seeking lawyers, the kind that got O.J. Simpson to walk? Or procedural protections that require that evidence be thrown out if the laboratory equipment has not recently been recalibrated or if the evidence was not kept in the proper chain of custody** and so on and on? That is to say, **why should terrorist suspects be granted all the gold-plated protections available to Americans when these right were never granted to all comers? Some cite the high number of convictions in civilian courts as evidence that these courts can deal with terrorists. However, they ignore the fact that most of these convictions were not of transnational terrorists operating abroad**, but of locally-active terrorists (e.g., members of the FARC from Colombia); **that those convicted often received light sentences; and, above all, that prosecutors had to rely on plea bargaining so as to protect sources and methods of intelligence gathering from being revealed in open court**. This is not to

say that we must try terrorists in military tribunals. Rather, they should be accorded their own special court similar to FISA court, established by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

A few arguments here:

1. Etzioni makes a pathos-based argument that terrorists do not deserve the protection of the American justice system because it is a privilege granted only to American citizens, not a natural right.
2. He also makes a more logic-based argument that civilian courts are not equipped to prosecute crimes that span borders. In addition, various evidence requirements would potentially endanger the classified nature of some highly sensitive national security information.

Along similar lines, the con will argue drone strikes are not subject to sufficient oversight in order to ensure they are conducted in accordance with U.S. and international law. Drone advocates dismiss this claim. Etzioni writes,

Etzioni, 2013 [“Everything Libertarians and Liberals Get Wrong About Drones,” Amitai, professor of international relations at The George Washington University, The Atlantic, April 30.]
Critics argue that drones reflect a usurpation of power by the "imperial presidency." This is to say that President **Obama, who has greatly expanded** the employment of **drones, is acting without Congressional authorization** and oversight. **Actually Congress granted the president on September 14, 2001, the power "to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States**." **If the critics' concern was merely that this resolution might not apply to those who are not card-carrying members of al-Qaeda -- and that Obama was thus overstepping the resolution's bounds -- they would focus their efforts on urging the president to return to Congress and ask for a new resolution** with slightly more inclusive wording. **He wouldn't need to worry; even the much-divided Congress would approve what it takes to stop terrorist, in particular after** the latest attack in **Boston**. However, **this is hardly what critics call for, revealing that their true motive is to curb the use of drones** rather than find ways to dot the i's and cross the t's when it comes to their use. **Critics also complain that drones are not subject to Congressional oversight. Actually Congress is regularly briefed about this campaign. As** Democratic Senator **Diane Feinstein** of California, a strong liberal herself, **recently stated: "Senate Intelligence Committee is kept fully informed of counterterrorism operations and keeps close watch to make sure they are effective, responsible and in keeping with U.S. and international law**."

He makes a few arguments:

1. Recent resolutions have set the tone for drone strikes to be considered legal, with congressional approval.
2. Oversight wouldn’t solve the problems that anti-drone activists outline because Congress will not likely restrict drones, even with more review. This is for a number of reasons, including public pressure to be strong on terrorism (made even stronger by the fact that there has been a recent terror attack) and also that Congress had traditionally been very supportive of anti-terror initiatives of any kind.
3. Congress members on the Senate Intelligence Committee already receive regular briefings on drone strikes and feel that they are appropriate.

You can use these arguments to make what essentially amounts to a "non-unique" argument to the con's "no oversight" disadvantage. **Essentially, there's a lot of oversight now and, even with more oversight, drone policy is likely to stay exactly the same.**

The same is true with international law. Etzioni continues:

Etzioni, 2013 ["Everything Libertarians and Liberals Get Wrong About Drones," Amitai, professor of international relations at The George Washington University, The Atlantic, April 30.]
Critics further claim that, according to international law, force should be used only when terrorists pose an imminent treat. However, because terrorists do not abide by the rules of armed conflicts, **which require that combatants identify themselves** as such, **and not merely reveal their status only when ready to strike, all those who can be reliably identified as terrorists are a legitimate target. Imagine if the terrorists wore uniforms and belonged to, say, the German army in World War II. They then would be a fair target whether they were training, regrouping, rearming, or even at rest. Simply because al-Qaeda** and its associates **hide their status does not mean that they should be accorded better protection**.

He's making an additional argument here, and it's a powerful distinction to make in debate. When the "con" makes arguments about international law and the integrity of that system, you should point out that terrorists present a special case. When international laws were drafted, terrorism was less of an issue and most conflict took place between two militaries rather than a military and a stateless group. Unlike soldiers, terrorists do not identify themselves until they've already committed the act of terrorism. For this reason, failing to allow drone strikes against potential terrorists makes it unlikely that we can reliably identify them. In addition, international law concludes that all enemy soldiers are justifiable targets. By that logic, so are terrorists.

Another con objection to current policy is the use of "signature strikes." A signature strike targets an individual based on their characteristics (their signature) rather than their known criminal activity. A signature strike, then, would find someone with a list of characteristics associated with terrorist activity, such as (just hypothetically): young, male, associated with radical groups, living at a terrorist training camp, etc. Con authors say this practice is ripe for abuse because it targets an identity rather than a specific individual. Blair, however, explains the necessity of maintaining signature strikes as an option:

Blair, 2013 ["U.S. Drone Strike Policies," Admiral Dennis, Former Director of National Intelligence, Council on Foreign Relations, January 22.]
But let me say it this way, **we should think about drones as long-range snipers in the military sense. For years, the United States** and other countries **send small teams behind lines in order to try to shoot at forces that are declared hostile connected to the battlefield. And the process for declaring forces hostile and giving snipers a guidance on who they can shoot at and who they can't is a well-known process. It can be made by military commanders. And I don't think it's any different for drones. If we are** in a -- if we are **fighting in Afghanistan, for example, and we know that across the border in Pakistan there are Taliban groups who are gathering and training, and then I think we could authorize either snipers** -- people with rifles -- **or drones to shoot at armed men who we see getting into pickup trucks and heading towards the Afghanistan border or who are in a -- in a training exercise because they've been declared hostile, having those characteristics**. So I think that these -- **I think that drones can and should be used, like many military weapons, under the normal procedures for law of war, not simply for killing identified terrorist leaders** who are -- who have been plotting against us.

Blair here draws a connection between drones and guns. He argues that, for someone to be legally shot in a war, they do not need to be identified by name as a known terrorist leader but rather simply engage in questionable or hostile behavior. Many people wouldn't object to shooting at, say, the men from a terrorist training camp attempting to cross a border. By the same logic, **those not opposed to combat in general should not be opposed to drones.**

Another major "con" objection is the "backlash" argument**. Con authors allege that drone use necessarily makes people in other countries hate the U.S. because drones kill civilians, even children, and make everyone in drone-targeted areas live in fear**. Those individuals are "radicalized" (or turned toward dangerous anti-American ideas) and are allegedly more likely to become terrorists to get revenge for drone violence. We will discuss both parts of this claim – first, we'll discuss the "drones cause civilian casualties" argument and then we will discuss the backlash component.

Fair, 2013 ["For Now, Drones Are the Best Option," C. Christine, assistant professor at Georgetown University's Center for Peace and Security Studies, New York Times, January 29.]
It is impossible to say whether drone warfare has done more harm than good in the tribal areas of Pakistan, where I have the greatest familiarity and where most drone strikes have apparently occurred. **The Central Intelligence Agency and Pakistan's intelligence agency and military have revealed little about actual targets and outcomes, so we cannot assess whether the people they were trying to kill were "drone worthy**." **Most journalism relies on dubious Pakistani reports that exaggerate innocent civilian casualties and discount terrorist fatalities. There are few efforts to independently verify "first-hand accounts," which are always assumed to be true**. Finally, **no forensic experts have been employed to verify claims about injuries to discern if they comport with ballistics and weapon effects associated with drone-delivered munitions. Given that trauma, injury and death can be attributed to terrorist attacks and Pakistani conventional military operations, this form of verification is critical**.

A few arguments:

1. Witnesses are notoriously unreliable and, given the classified nature of drone operations, it's impossible to check and see if someone is telling the truth when they say a drone killed their family or friends. Fair alleges that many drone witnesses may have ulterior motives, such as getting press or trying to make the U.S. look bad.
2. Even if witnesses are telling the truth, it's impossible to say if the casualties they're talking about are from drones, from conventional military strikes, or even from their own government. To an untrained observer, these may look very similar if not exactly the same.

Fair implies here that accounts of civilian casualties are very inflated and that, even if witnesses are reliable, they could be mistaken. That partially undermines the backlash argument by challenging the civilian casualties claim. The rest of the argument is answered in a number of ways. We'll begin with more Etzioni:

Etzioni, 2013 ["Everything Libertarians and Liberals Get Wrong About Drones," Amitai, professor of international relations at The George Washington University, The Atlantic, April 30.]
Some critics worry that relying upon drones will engender significant resentment and potentially **aid terrorist recruitment** efforts. However, **those who are inclined towards terrorism already loathe the United States for a thousand other reasons. Pew surveys show that anti-Americanism thrives in**

regions where there have been no drone strikes (for example, in Egypt) **and, where drones have been active, high levels of anti-Americanism predated their arrival** (for instance in Pakistan).

This simple argument uses data to de-contextualize the claim. **Anti-Americanism can, has, and often does exist without drones**, Etzioni argues. As the pro, you should argue that this means the con's claims **are not reverse causal**. Yes, drones may cause resentment but the removal of drones arguably would not fix said resentment. For this reason, you can argue that drone use is justified based on benefits because the "harm" of resentment is not attributable to them. Swift continues:

Swift, 2012 ["The Drone Blowback Fallacy," Christopher, Adjunct Professor of National Security Studies at Georgetown University and a Fellow at the University of Virginia Law School's Center for National Security Law, Foreign Affairs, July 1.]
Last month, **I traveled to Yemen to study how AQAP operates and whether the conventional understanding of the relationship between drones and recruitment is correct**. While there, **I conducted 40 interviews** with tribal leaders, Islamist politicians, Salafist clerics, and other sources. **These subjects came from 14 of Yemen's 21 provinces**, most from rural regions. Many faced insurgent infiltration in their own districts. Some of them were actively fighting AQAP. Two had recently visited terrorist strongholds in Jaar and Zinjibar as guests. I conducted each of these in-depth interviews using structured questions and a skilled interpreter. I have withheld my subjects' names to protect their safety — a necessity occasioned by the fact that some of them had survived assassination attempts and that others had recently received death threats. These men had little in common with the Yemeni youth activists who capture headlines and inspire international acclaim. **As a group, they were** older, more conservative, and more **skeptical of U.S. motives**. They were less urban, less wealthy, and substantially less secular. **But to my astonishment, none of the individuals I interviewed drew a causal relationship between U.S. drone strikes and al Qaeda recruiting**. Indeed, of the 40 men in this cohort, **only five believed that U.S. drone strikes were helping al Qaeda more than they were hurting it. Al Qaeda exploits U.S. errors, to be sure. As the Yemen scholar Gregory Johnsen correctly observes, the death of some 40 civilians in the December 2009 cruise missile strike on Majala infuriated ordinary Yemenis and gave AQAP an unexpected propaganda coup. But the fury produced by such tragedies is not systemic, not sustained, and, ultimately, not sufficient**. As much as al Qaeda might play up civilian casualties and U.S. intervention in its recruiting videos, **the Yemeni tribal leaders I spoke to reported that the factors driving young men into the insurgency are overwhelmingly economic**. From al Hudaydah in the west to Hadhramaut in the east, **AQAP is building** complex webs of **dependency within Yemen's rural population. It gives idle teenagers cars, khat, and rifles** — the symbols of Yemeni manhood. **It pays salaries** (up to $400 per month) **that lift families out of poverty. It supports weak and marginalized sheikhs by digging wells, distributing patronage to tribesmen, and punishing local criminals**. As the leader of one Yemeni tribal confederation told me, "**Al Qaeda attracts those who can't afford to turn away." Religious figures echoed these words. Though critical of the U.S. drone campaign, none** of the Islamists and Salafists I interviewed **believed that drone strikes explain al Qaeda's burgeoning numbers. "The driving issue is development**," an Islamist parliamentarian from Hadramout province said. **"Some districts are so poor that joining al Qaeda represents the best of several bad options**." (Other options include criminality, migration, and even starvation.) A Salafi scholar engaged in hostage negotiations with AQAP agreed. "**Those who fight do so because of the injustice in this country," he explained. "A few in the north are driven by ideology, but in the south it is mostly about poverty and corruption." Despite Yemenis' antipathy toward drones, my conversations also revealed a surprising degree of pragmatism. Those living in active conflict zones drew clear distinctions between earlier U.S. operations**, such as the Majala bombing, **and more recent strikes on senior al Qaeda figures. "Things were very bad in 2009," a tribal militia commander from Abyan province told me, "but now the drones are seen as helping us**." He explained that Yemenis could "accept [drones] as long as

there are no more civilian casualties." An Islamist member of the separatist al-Harak movement offered a similar assessment. "**Ordinary people have become very practical about drones," he said. "If the United States focuses on the leaders and civilians aren't killed, then drone strikes will hurt al Qaeda more than they help them." Some of the men I interviewed admitted that they had changed their minds about drone strikes. Separatists in Aden** who openly derided AQAP as a proxy of Yemen's recently deposed president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, **privately acknowledged the utility of the U.S. drone campaign. "Saleh created this crisis in order to steal from America and stay in power**," a former official from the now-defunct People's Democratic Republic of Yemen told me. "**Now it is our crisis, and we need every tool to solve it." Yemeni journalists**, particularly those with firsthand exposure to AQAP, shared this view: "**I opposed the drone campaign until I saw what al Qaeda was doing in Jaar and Zinjibar**," an independent reporter in Aden said. "**Al Qaeda hates the drones, they're absolutely terrified of the drones … and that is why we need them.**" My interviewees also offered deeper insight into the sentiments described by Western journalists and Yemeni activists. In their view, **public opposition to drones had little to do with a desire for revenge or increasing sympathy for al Qaeda. Instead, they argued, ordinary Yemenis see the drones as an affront to their national pride. "Drones remind us that we don't have the ability to solve our problems by ourselves**," one member of the Yemeni Socialist Party said. "**If these were Yemeni drones, rather than American drones, there would be no issue at all." Surprisingly, Islamist politicians said much the same. "No one resents a drone strike if the target was a terrorist**," a member of the Muslim Brotherhood told me. "What we resent is the fact that outsiders are involved." A leader from the Zaydi Shia community framed the sovereignty issue in even starker terms. "The problem is not killing people like [Anwar] al-Awlaki," he said, referring to the Yemeni-American al Qaeda propagandist killed in 2011 by a U.S. drone strike in Yemen. "The problem is when the U.S. ambassador goes on television and takes credit for it."

This card is long, but it contains a number of important arguments:

1. Most in Yemen, a major drone strike region, do not believe that drones are to blame for terrorist recruitment.
2. The main driver of terrorist recruitment is not drones or even foreign involvement; it's poverty. Terrorist organizations can afford to pay young men higher salaries than they would otherwise make, and so many choose terrorism as a way to provide for their families. Eliminating drones does nothing to address this issue.
3. Most people in heavy drone regions do not like terrorist organizations very much, either. They understand the need for drones and, as a result, their resentment is not so much about drone use but just a general frustration that their government is less able to control the issue at this time.

This article is great; I suggest sourcing and cutting it yourself to get a better idea of what Swift is arguing. When you debate the backlash argument, you may want to read a shorter version of the card that you cut yourself. In any case, this evidence makes a persuasive argument that drones aren't key but economics are, plus it gives the pro some defense that people uninvolved in terror actually appreciate drones.

Another common con argument is the idea that, since drones can't be killed, and since U.S. troops aren't as directly in danger with drones, drones make warfare more likely. The reason for this, con authors argue, is that **going to war should be hard and force leaders to make life-and-death decisions for our troops. If it's too easy, we'll start to do it all the time, leading to endless war.** Etzioni disagrees,

Etzioni, 2013 ["Everything Libertarians and Liberals Get Wrong About Drones," Amitai, professor of international relations at The George Washington University, The Atlantic, April 30.]
Finally, critics worry that drones make going to war too easy. Drones are said to represent "the final step in the industrial revolution of war -- a clean factory of slaughter with no physical blood on our hands and none of our own side killed." In response one must ask**: Would the people involved in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and now in Africa be better-off if terrorists were killed in "hot" blood** -- say, knifed by Special Forces, blood and brain matter splashing in their faces? **Would the world be better off if our troops, in order to reach the terrorists, had to endure improvised explosive devices blowing up their legs and arms and gauntlets of fire from AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenade launchers -- traumatic experiences** that turn some of them into psychopath-like killers? Beyond such considerations, **there is so far no evidence that the extensive use of drones has made going to war more likely or its extension more acceptable**. **Anybody who has followed the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq despite the recent increase in drone strikes should know better**. As someone who has spent over two years in combat, I suggest that the main point of moral judgment comes before one asks which means are legitimate when attacking an enemy**. The main turning point concerns the question of whether we should fight at all. This is the crucial decision, because once we engage in armed conflict, we must assume that there are going to be many casualties on all sides. When we deliberate whether or not to fight, we should assume that once we step on this escalator, it will carry us to places we would rather not go. Drones are merely a new rung on this woeful journey. Hence, we should deliberate carefully before we suit up, but draw on drones extensively if fight we must. They are more closely scrutinized and they cause less collateral damage than any other means of warfare**.
Again, several arguments:

1. The unspoken premise in the con's argument is that war should be deadly. Etzioni points out that they are essentially arguing that there should be many casualties, civilian and U.S. military, in a war. Given the option between that and a relatively less dangerous option, they argue for the more dangerous one. Etzioni argues that this is silly and should be simplified: **fewer people dying is always a good thing.**
2. So far, there's no evidence that drones make war more likely; only evidence that since we've started using drones we've withdrawn from several major conflicts.
3. There is still a high barrier to going to war. Etzioni points out that the military will always understand that wars are dangerous and require careful deliberation. If anything, he reasons, having drones available as a half-measure between open conflict and doing nothing is good; it gives us an option that avoids open conflict so we don't jump into a full commitment without cause.

The final con argument we will address is the idea that **U.S. use of drones necessarily causes the spread of drone technology to other nations and stateless entities**, like terror organizations. That, they argue, would be potentially disastrous because **we would no longer have a monopoly on the use of drones and the international law loopholes we've exploited could be used against us**. Blair dismisses this argument as well, saying,

Blair, 2013 ["U.S. Drone Strike Policies," Admiral Dennis, Former Director of National Intelligence, Council on Foreign Relations, January 22.]

The first point is I'm less persuaded that international norms really have much of an effect when it comes to the use of force against the United States. My experience is **that nation-states are generally either encouraged or deterred by their sort of cost-benefit calculation, and so** I -- **as other countries develop drones of their own, I think that they will make their own decisions on how they** -- on how they **use them, looking at the United States' experience but drawing on their own** -- on their -- on their own **interests and fears. I think that nonstate organizations, terrorist groups, extremist groups, are not deterrable, and they look at U.S. norms in order to find weaknesses in them, not to** -- not to **be led by them**. And they -- **if a terrorist group can get hold of drone technology, it will use it against us every way we can. So I'm not so much persuaded that norms can be set by the United States in this area**.

Blair argues that, even if we did set perfect norms, other countries wouldn't follow them. He makes the realist argument that states make calculations about whether to engage in conflict much more due to factors like whether or not they think they can win and how much they have to lose (not what others have done or what the "rules" are). In addition, if a country truly hostile to the U.S. were to acquire drones, they wouldn't follow our example anyway.

You can use this argument against international law arguments as well to argue that any violation of international law by the U.S. would have no particular impact on the actions of other nations.

That concludes our topic "pro" analysis for Nationals. Be on the lookout for our con analysis, coming soon! We wish you luck on the Nationals topic.

As always, let us know if you have questions in the comments or via e-mail. When you finish your Nationals cases, don't forget to send them for a free critique to lauren.sabino@ncpa.org! **Good luck this season!**