

A TYPOLOGY OF ARGUMENTS ABOUT DRONE ETHICS

Mary Manjikian

While there is widespread opposition to the acquisition and deployment of drones for both surveillance and combat units at the mass and elite levels, individuals and groups differ in the specifics of their arguments. Among domestic and international opponents of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technologies, we can identify arguments that take issue with: specific aspects of the weapons themselves (such as their ability to target precisely); the character of an individual or society that uses these weapons; the ways in which these weapons can change the relationship between a combatant and his adversary; or the way that this technology creates new international norms or doctrines for the conduct of warfare. Thus, anti-drone arguments come in different variants, rely on differing assumptions, and lead to differing policy recommendations – from an absolute ban on their existence to a more nuanced set of guidelines for their creation and deployment. For a commander or planner who wishes to respond to ethical arguments being raised about drones, this Letort Paper can serve as a type of field guide, helping the decision-maker to identify the type of argument being made and the specific concerns which undergird this type of ethical thinking. Knowing this information, decision-makers are better equipped with specific responses to address these concerns.

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