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U.S. Identity in Times of Drones

Crisis and Security Management, Thesis (MSc)

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I. Introduction

Academic inquiry into the international behavior of states is generally founded upon theoretical considerations that aim to explain how states perceive the world and how they react to it (Hansen, 2006). The wide variety of academic perspectives that exists on this issue is therefore not a result of divergences in this basic scientific purpose. Rather, different approaches emerge from different perspectives on how people come to perceive the world, how their actions stand in relation to this and how we can examine this in a scientific manner.

One such approach that has recently greatly benefited the study of international political behavior is the so-called poststructuralist mode of academic inquiry, which stresses the importance of language for the construction of social reality, and more specifically the complementary close relation between identity and political action (Ibid., 2006). What studies inspired by poststructuralism emphasize, in contrast to more conventional positivistic academic approaches, is the fact that ideational and material aspects of social and political reality cannot be studied as if they represent two radically separated entities of an objective reality. Consequently, this approach aims to break out of the Western scientific tradition with its focus on positivistic research and its implicit reliance on an objective materialist field of inquiry or a pure idealist one (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Poststructuralism, on the contrary, argues that neither the former nor the latter exists in its pure form, since both material objects and thoughts receive meaning by being constructed through language (Hansen, 2006). Only in language can a thing receive a particular identity, since it is portrayed in relation to linguistic values and concepts (Ibid., 2006). This is significant for international politics, since this means that national identity or foreign policy can only be meaningful by the way in which it can linguistically be portrayed.

What this subsequently means is that for poststructuralists, identity and foreign policy are inseparable, since they both rely on established linguistic discourses for receiving meaning. Such discourses endow a material or ideational object with a relatively stable identity. A sudden radical change in foreign policy or national identity would therefore be rare and difficult, since this would imply a change in the whole constitution of the discourse as well. For example, when a state's identity and foreign policy is traditionally based on a discourse of democracy, freedom, capitalism and human rights, while suddenly its government enters into a close trade relationship with a dictatorship notorious for its abuse of

human rights, this foreign policy would most probably face heavy resistance and be abandoned, or else the government would have to be able to adjust discourse in such a way that its economic activities would be portrayed as separate from its political ones. What this implies, is that identity and action should be compatible with each other so both can exist within the larger discourse. However, as both the government's ability to change discourse and the opposition towards it from our example indicate, the discourse is neither completely solid nor fluid (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: p. 111). Consequently, when a striking change in foreign policy of a particular state is identifiable, it is rather well possible that a simultaneous broader change in identity discourse has occurred as well.

Such a remarkable change of action has arguably occurred with the relatively recent decision by the U.S. government to start using drone strikes in other sovereign states, with which it is not in official conflict, as a strategy of military intervention. The U.S. started using such kind of activities under the second Bush Administration, from 2005 till 2009, and continued to use this activity under both Obama Administrations as well. The emergence of this type of action is justifiably regarded to be remarkable, since the U.S. traditionally accompanied its military interventions with considerable humanitarian programs aimed at the development of the country it interfered in; something which is absent from the mere execution of drone strikes (Cottey, 2008). It is furthermore important that this conventional type of military action the U.S. undertook was portrayed in relation to U.S. identity based on a discourse of Modernization Theory (Latham, 2011).

Modernization Theory has since the Cold War generally explained much of the international behavior of the U.S. (Ibid., 2011). This discourse implies that history proceeds along a linear line of development, culminating in the 'true' state of modernity, as exemplified by the U.S's culture of Liberalism, capitalism and democracy (Ibid., 2011). As a result of this inevitable linear progressive line that characterizes history, the U.S. came to perceive itself as a responsible actor that could help other nations reach this level of development as well by accelerating their development (Weldes, 1999). Whatever are the true underlying motivations for this belief in a necessary course of history that could be accelerated, it seems only naturally that it served as a suitable justification for international military interventions as well (Klein, 2003).[1] Albeit serving mostly as a way to justify military

[1] Although one is easily inclined these days, when looking back with the eye of the historian, to regard this belief in modernization theory as a clear tool for justifying the pursuit of national self-interest in foreign affairs, it is nevertheless not that easy to argue this. Of course modernization theory came specifically to the fore during the Cold War period, when it could easily be used as a foreign policy tool against the spread of Communism. Its scientific roots, however, go farther back to the 19th century belief in historical dialectical progression, of which

intervention during the Cold War in light of a Communist antagonist, after this war had ended modernization theory nevertheless has persisted to be appealed to during foreign military campaigns, such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq under President George W. Bush (Chandler, 2006). Although the application of this perspective served the U.S. well for justifying its global military conduct, the focus on historical development and progression also brought a burden on the U.S. to help these other countries with their development by means of long, expensive and often troublesome aid programs (Latham, 2011). A promise of development towards an American style of modernity therefore appeared to inevitably bring obligations with it as well, if, in any case, the U.S. did not want to lose all of its international credibility (Cottey, 2008).

The decision of the U.S. presidency to start using drone strikes as a viable strategy of military intervention can be called peculiar, since it wholly tends to disregard this humanitarian aspect of conventional military intervention, while this humanitarian side was fundamental in the relation between the U.S.' actions and identity. After all, Modernization Theory, as being an ideology which aims at explaining the whole of social reality, fundamentally established the dominant discourse on U.S. identity and the U.S.' place in the world in time (Klein, 2003). For that reason, the action of military intervention was deemed to be justifiable since the U.S. regarded itself and the world to be benefiting from it. The more liberal democracies the U.S. was able help develop, the closer the ideal of world peace and prosperity was reached (Latham, 2011). Subsequently basing their military strategy on targeted drone strikes, a strategy which at first glance does not seem to help the other country develop politically towards democracy or Liberalism, therefore seems to be a major departure from this traditional balance between action and identity. In light of the novelty of this type of action, it is therefore interesting to examine how this change is explainable. For this, we can then look at how the relation between U.S. identity and action has developed in light of its usage of drone strikes.

Stemming from these considerations, it has become clear that a research question worthy of pursuit is: How has the U.S. presidency framed the relation between its novel usage of drone strikes in other sovereign countries with which it is not in official military conflict, and its perception of U.S. identity, since it started to make use of this type of action during the second Bush Administration until the end of the second Obama Administration? Because this study is based on poststructuralist approaches of international politics, the examination of the

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Marxism and Communism are also clear offspring (Latham, 2011). To only argue that it is a hypocritical foreign policy tool therefore seems not to be totally justified. In the first chapter we will discuss this in some more detail.

framing by the U.S. presidency will focus on the language deployed by this actor, for it is through language that we make sense of the world (Klotz and Lynch, 2007).

Academically, this research firstly wants to contribute to the general academic interest in targeted drone strikes. Although there has recently admittedly been an upsurge of academic and journalistic research into the issue of U.S. military drone usage, these have however focused more on the technical, practical or ethical sides of the issue (Senn and Troy, 2017). This study, on the other hand, focuses more on the relation between U.S. drone strikes and U.S. identity, whereby it is examined what the emergence of drone strikes illuminates about the social reality in which the U.S. perceives itself to be. Moreover, it wants to contribute more generally to the academic study on the international behavior of the U.S., which can benefit from this study by its examination of the development of U.S. identity.

Socially, the main contribution of this work arguably can be found in its illumination of the social reality the U.S. presidency puts forward to justify its actions. This way, citizens and politicians alike can gain an in-depth knowledge on how the U.S. presidency portrays its own version of reality, which they can subsequently endorse or criticize. Specifically important in this regard is the fact that this study demonstrates that the choice for a particular policy is not merely related to this policy itself, but rather to the worldview it indicates. As such, judgment on the policy does not merely have to rely on the specific policy, but can be substantiated by referring to its wider political and societal implications as well.

Regarding the structure of this thesis, the next section will provide a conceptual framework and literature overview on the topic. This section will start with a general discussion on the relation between discourse, identity and action, which will be an expansion of the preliminary discussion provided above. Then, the literature discussion will move on to the topic of U.S. drone strikes. Following this conceptual framework and literature review, a methodological section will specify the research design and methods that will be used for this research. An extensive discussion on discourse analysis will be provided, as well as additional considerations on the methodological issue of researching identity formation. Furthermore, this section establishes the specific limits of this research: it discusses the cases that will be chosen to look at, the time frame, the selection of primary source material and the limitations inherent to our current investigations. After that, the main analysis will be provided. After a more extensive discussion of Modernization Theory and U.S. military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, which is important since this is the basic discourse to which the U.S. presidency had to respond, the chosen cases will be dealt with one by one in a chronological order, in order to be able to see the development of the discourse on U.S. drone strikes.

Finally, a concluding section will summarize the main findings of this research and suggest additional research objectives.

II. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Discourse, Identity and Action

Our basic focus on the way the U.S. government *frames* its usage of military drone strikes implies that this research is fundamentally based on a post-positivist approach to the social sciences, which claims that social reality is constituted by our perception of it. This means that when human beings try to make sense of this reality, they inescapably have to construct a demarcated and understandable meaning out of the totality of potential interpretations of this reality. Post-positivist scientific research on social phenomena therefore takes as its starting point that a search for the understanding of this objective reality is unattainable, since the only way in which human beings experience reality and determine their actions based on this, is through their acquired understanding of this – which is preceded by their interpretation of it and the meaning attached to it (Klotz and Lynch, 2007). Contrary to positivistic academic approaches, which look at social phenomena as objective reality, post-positivist approaches prefer to examine the particular ways in which actors give meaning to reality and the ways in which a particular 'reality' came to be constituted historically.

The poststructuralist approach this research adheres to, means that this interpretative nature of reality is studied through our concern with language. For poststructuralism, language is namely not a medium that merely transfers data to us, but rather a form of social action through which we come to understand the world (Hansen, 2006). Reality is therefore fundamentally mediated by language, which means we cannot understand reality outside of our linguistic constructions thereof. Language, as suchs forms the ontological basis of our social world (Ibid., 2006).

By ascribing this role to language, these approaches are heavily influenced by the thought of Michel Foucault, which focuses on the phenomenon of language by means of discursive formations, which concerns how social reality comes to be understood. Foucault himself, for example, traced how discourses on madness (Foucault, 1965) or the prison (Foucault, 1977) have evolved over time, whereby greatly influencing the social practices involved with these issues. For him, language therefore has a performative function, rather than a mere descriptive one. In practical terms, this means that actors give meaning to and

make sense of the world through the use of language rather than that language is used as a descriptive tool for objectively describing reality. As such, it follows that intersubjective human communication has to be based on a shared linguistic interpretation of reality, for otherwise it would in practice be impossible to communicate with one another at an understandable level.[2] Discourse formations are for Foucault then the relatively closed linguistic formations people employ to interpret certain parts of reality (Baker-Beall, 2014).

By referring to Foucault's works on madness and the prison, we have however also stated that discourse formations greatly influence the social practices associated with this part of social reality. For Foucault, this is the case since our social practices are strongly related to the way we understand and make sense of the world. This way, the domination of a specific discourse contributes to our understanding of what actions are deemed to be acceptable and what actions are regarded as unacceptable (Ibid., 2014). This is for example clearly visible in Foucault's work on madness, where he argues that the shifting understanding of madness towards a focus on its character of social anomaly has opened up the space for the emergence of institutions to place such 'mad' people in, in an effort to separate them from 'normal' social life (Foucault, 1965). The shifting language people have used to talk about, and hence interpret, madness, has thus allowed for the emergence of certain associated practices as well.

To fully comprehend what Foucault means by this close relation between discourse, identity and action, we have to elaborate further on the theoretical issue of language as social practice, as explained by poststructuralists. What they mean when they consider language to be a social practice is that rather than using language as a tool to refer to a specific object, we use it as a way of establishing the *relationship* between the term that object represents and other linguistic signs. This relationship is established through a 'process of linking' linguistic signs to it, and simultaneously through a 'process of differentiation' (Hansen, 2006: p. 17). Though perhaps hard to grasp in this theoretical vocabulary, a concrete example clarifies what this means. When we for example use the word 'woman' to refer to a particular woman during a political debate, we do not use this word to refer to *a specific* woman. Rather, when we use this word, we imply its positive meaning by linking other linguistic signs to it – perhaps 'caring' or 'emotional' – and its negative meaning by juxtaposing it to the other linguistic sign of 'man'. Trough this juxtaposition, the sign 'man' is linked to signs that are

[2] It is important here to realize that Foucault did not in any way preclude the presence of disagreements or diverging perspectives. What he was rather after was the influence of a so called 'episteme', as he discussed in his work *The Order of Things.* An episteme is a much more abstract concept for the way people generally understand the world in a given time period and area, which influences the discourses on particular issues. In a way, it determines the possibilities people have for thinking about a certain aspect of reality. Within a discourse, however, there are of course different opinions possible.

oppositional to the one's attached to 'woman'. Here, they would then for example be 'independent' and 'rational'. What is subsequently important, is that this juxtaposing is never executed in a balanced manner, but rather implies a hierarchical preference for one of the two (Ibid., 2006).

We therefore speak of a dominating discourse when the processes of linking and differentiation establish a stable identity for a certain group over a period of time. The practical side of such a dominating discourse is that it establishes the relations of social practice as well. The implications of dominating discourses for social practice is for example clearly demonstrable by comparing how past discourses on women as clearly inferior to men and current discourses on women as much more equal to men have affected the political positions of women in many countries. It is for this close relation between identity and action that poststructuralist accounts of international politics have stressed the importance of examining their relation trough analyzing discourses.

In the international political realm, this discourse on identity and action mostly concerns the way in which a state portrays itself in relation to the international political arena. What is of particular importance here is the construction of a 'Self' as opposed to an 'Other'. This construction of the 'Self' is done by identifying with certain actors or discursive values that come to be part of 'us', while the 'Other' is created by means of a discursive juxtaposition (Epstein, 2008). The 'Self' is thus established by the 'process of linking' signs to our own identity, while the 'Other' is constituted through the 'process of differentiation'. Often, the 'Self' is portrayed in a privileged hierarchical position in relation to the 'Other', but this is not necessarily the case (Hansen, 2006).

Moreover, as we have seen, this discourse on the 'Self' and the 'Other' is never completely fixed, but rather always in the process of making. In this process, the established balance between identity and foreign action can take new forms in light of the emergence of new empirical events or ideas. When such a new event takes place, it can either change the traditional balance that was found between identity and policy by introducing a new balance, it can be portrayed in terms of the conventional discourse, or it can be silenced for it does not fit this discourse and there is a lack of will or ability to change it (Ibid., 2006). It is important to keep in mind, however, that poststructuralist approaches in such cases do not aim at finding causal links as to identify what specifically led to this change or impeded it. This is a result of the ontological status awarded to language. Since material as well as ideational aspects of reality are namely only comprehensible through putting a linguistic sign on them, they become inevitably embedded in the linguistic systems in place. Consequently, while new

events might have an impact on the way we understand reality through language, they are nevertheless also impacted by the traditional way of understanding the world. Identity and policy can therefore not cause one another to change in the poststructuralist perspective; they are linked through the linguistic interpretation awarded to them (Ibid., 2006). The absence of causality in poststructuralism is therefore not the result of a deliberate choice to abstain from it. Rather, it is the inevitable result of the theoretical considerations on language.

What we are interested in here is then to examine how social actors attempt to accommodate identity and action through the discursive strategies they deploy to make sense of specific events. For that reason, our current investigations are focused on scrutinizing the way in which the emergence of a new political phenomenon – namely the U.S. usage of drone strikes in other sovereign states – has affected this traditional balance between U.S. identity and action. Since identity is however a complex empirical concept to investigate, it is necessary to theoretically discuss more in-depth in what fashion identity is constituted in the international political realm.

The composition of identity is always comprised of a spatial, temporal and ethical aspect, as Hansen (2006) argues. What this in its basic form means is that one's perception of his or her own identity is dependent on how one regards one's existence to be related to overall considerations of space, time and ethics. Our basic outlook on these three components is therefore strongly related to what we see as the identity of the 'Self' and the identity of the 'Other'. This can be the case, for these three components represent the fundamental experiences of human existence. Space, then, can refer to our literal existence at a specific territory on the face of the earth with which we identify ourselves, or can refer to the more figurative sense of space as for example representing a political or cultural space (Ibid., 2006). In this latter instance, one can for example divide the space of the earth in an area of Liberal democratic political communities as opposed to those areas where political communities are organized in a different fashion, or one can place a line of separation between diverging civilizations based on the historical development of specific cultures. The temporal aspect, moreover, refers to our experience of existence in time. That this aspect is important for the way we view our existence on the earth and the way we live is clearly demonstrable by comparing the influence this aspect has had through history. For Western politics, for example, the predominance of Christianity in Medieval times, with its perspective on earthly time as a mere transition towards heavenly eternity, lead to a situation in which the political community was regarded with a sense of disdain, as not being worthy of much attention (Cassirer, 1946). With the demise of Christianity, however, and the growing realization that

all that humans were left with was their time on earth, focus shifted more towards the 'making' of history and the belief in a progression of humanity as an organic whole, which came to be the main meaning attached to the passing of time and the place of human beings therein (Arendt, 2006).

The ethical aspect, lastly, is related to what we think we ought to do in light of the before mentioned spatial and temporal aspects (Hansen, 2006). What this first and foremost indicates is that the three components can in no way be regarded as totally separate from each other. They are in many ways interwoven with each other, and all exert influence on one another. Regarding the ethical aspect, this can for example be the case when we have a relatively stable spatial and temporal understanding of our identity, which gives us a clear sense of the actions we ought to undertake. However, when a certain social phenomenon emerges which we think begs for our action to condemn or support it, this action can challenge the spatial and temporal sides of our identity as well. Historically, such events can for example be located in revolutionary uprisings that were directed at challenging the traditional spatial political division in order to demand new sources of political authority. Of course, nonetheless, such uprisings never occur in vacuum and are generally preceded by the spreading of new ideas which paved the way for the emergence of the event. However, the event itself can then serve as a catalyst for the overall shift in identity discourses. This again demonstrates how the different aspects are related to each other.

What these theoretical and conceptual considerations have thus assumed is that actors generally give meaning to a social reality they construct. This construction is carried out through the employment of language, in which a discourse formation gives a closed interpretation of a certain part of the social world. Poststructuralist studies of international politics have in this regard stressed the importance of identity for the construction of the international political world, since identity is related to how we see the world, our place in it and the actions we ought to carry out within it. Foreign policy and military matters are according to these studies therefore dependent on the construction of identities of the 'Self' and the 'Other'. Although the specific content of such identities is always prone to change and fluid in its nature, they nevertheless have a basis in their spatial, temporal and ethical aspects, which are the reasons for the importance of identity in the composition of social reality.

U.S Drone Strikes

One might wonder how this discussion on discourse formations and identity can be relevant for an academic inquiry into the emergence of U.S. drone strikes in other sovereign nation states. However, when keeping in mind that dominant discourses on identities have major repercussions for political and military action and vice versa, it becomes highly interesting to examine the interaction between the novel ability to carry out this type of action, and the wider spectrum of U.S. identity. Based on our prior conceptual discussions, it follows that either the meaning of the action can be placed in more traditional identity categories, or the action itself can challenge these conventional categories. At a first glance, as shortly discussed before, it appears that the novel action of drone strikes cannot be in accordance with the traditional categories of U.S. identity, which are largely based on the discourse of Modernization Theory. To substantiate these claims, we will look more closely in this section at the emergence of U.S. drone strikes, academic inquiry into it, and the overlooked aspects of this that are relevant for our current investigations.

Although the technical ability to carry out strikes in remote areas by means of drones was already present at the end of the last century – in that time Israel had been using it above the Palestinian territories (Chamayou, 2015) – the U.S. started to use this strategy only during the second Bush Administration. During that time, from 2005 until 2009, the number of U.S. drone attacks steadily climbed. It was however under the subsequent first Obama Administration that the number of drone attacks reached its peak, after which the number slowly decreased again, although the numbers continued to be relatively high compared to the first Bush Administration.[3] Establishing the exact number of U.S. drone attacks is nevertheless a difficult task, since many sources give different information partly due to the often remote areas in which these attacks take place. However, the numbers given by the U.S. governmental institutions themselves, which account for the lowest estimates, still estimate the number to lie around 500 strikes in total, causing military as well as civilian casualties (Gregory, 2017).

Due to these technological developments within the military sphere, the possibilities for the U.S. in relation to foreign military intervention therefore considerably changed. By using this specific technology, it was no longer needed to enter foreign countries with great numbers of military personnel, which could potentially release the U.S. from the detrimental

[3] For an extensive overview of the perceived number of U.S. drone attacks, see: https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2017-01-01/drone-wars-the-full-data. While this overview provides an enormous amount of information on the statistics of U.S. drone attacks, the exact number however remains an ever-contested topic.

burdens of the past (Chamayou, 2015). In the past, it was namely the case that the U.S. saw itself being dragged into considerable humanitarian programs as an addition to global military interventions (Cottey, 2008). Now with the emergence of the military drone technology, this situation arguably had radically changed.

There are a number of reasons identifiable as to why the emergence of drone strikes changed the nature of military intervention for the U.S. government. At a first glance, it appears that the development of this technology has made military intervention in other states easier for the U.S. to carry out. First and foremost, this is due to the fact that domestic soldiers no longer need to travel to dangerous areas of battle, meaning that the dangers for domestic casualties are kept to a minimum (Chamayou, 2015). Moreover, this absence of great risk and effort arguably makes it less necessary to convince domestic audiences and soldiers of the necessity of war (Ibid., 2015). Also, the perceived efficiency of drone strikes gave it a somewhat 'moral character' when compared to more conventional ways of military intervention. As a consequence of this image, scholars and journalists alike praised this new technology for its ability to 'save lives' (Strawser, 2010; Plaw, 2012).

In light of the novelty of the usage of this sort of military intervention by the U.S. government, academic inquiry into the issue has increased considerably in the last decade. What is remarkable in this regard, and perhaps understandable due to the novelty of the technology itself, is the fact that these studies have generally all tended to focus on the drone itself: whether on the way in which it is used, on the desirability of its usage or on its legal aspects. Focus hereby has for example been awarded to the question of how the execution of drone strikes relates to the issue of international law (Ahmed, 2013; Falk, 2014). Also, questions have been put forward regarding the effectiveness of using drone strikes as a means of foreign military intervention (Abbas, 2013; Boyle, 2013; Shah, 2018). What such studies for example deal with is whether or not drone campaigns ignite a backlash from the local population against the U.S., creating a situation in which they can potentially be counterproductive. Moreover, studies have been directed at the ethical implications of the application of drone strikes as a strategy of foreign military intervention, thereby for example focusing at the lowering of the threshold for military action (Chamayou, 2015).

Despite of the fact that these studies are all important in their own right, they nevertheless fail to address an important issue: how the increase in drone strikes by the U.S. government in other nation states relates to the wider perception of the identity of the U.S. government. Merely focusing on the action of drone strikes themselves namely ignores the fact that this action can only receive meaning in the context of the larger social world in

which it takes place, as we have seen in our discussion on post-positivist and post-Structuralist approaches towards politics. Therefore, arguing that drone strikes are desirable or undesirable based on some ethical, practical or legal argumentation can only tell us a partial side of the story. They can mostly provide us with arguments to argue for or against their usage. If, however, we want to assess how such a novel type of action relates to the wider question of U.S. identity, what place it receives in the social world, or how it affects the basic outlook on U.S. identity and the world, we have to approach the issue from the broader perspective of the spatial, temporal and ethical aspects of identity.

Our basic post-positivist and poststructuralist approach towards the issue therefore allows for the illumination of how actors have tried to make sense of this new type of action. Instead, for that reason, of considering U.S. foreign drone strikes to be an objective phenomenon with objectively identifiable causes and effects, it is here regarded as an additional phenomenon which has to relate itself to the existing understanding of the social and political world. In this way, we are able to detect how the emergence of U.S. drone strikes has been standing in relation to the larger issue of U.S. identity.

III. Methodology

Research Design

For this research, as we have seen, our main aim is to examine how the U.S. government frames the identity of the U.S. in relation to its usage of drone strikes in other sovereign nation states. From the discussions provided in the previous chapter, it becomes clear that for poststructuralists, this framing and the subsequent attaching of meaning onto the social world is brought about through the construction of certain discourse formations. Consequently, if we aim to scrutinize the framing on the hand of the U.S. government, we should look at the discourse employed by this actor. For that reason, the methodology and research design on which this particular research is built are derived from the method of discourse analysis.

Generally, research employing discourse analysis can choose from a number of variants for its research design. It is for example possible to analyze the struggle between two or more competing discourses on a single issue at one moment in time, or to analyze their development through time, for example by juxtaposing the discourses of oppositional political parties during one or a number of elections. Moreover, it is also possible to focus only on the discourse employed by one actor on one or multiple topics, at a singular moment or as a development throughout time. By making such choices about which actors and topics will be analyzed, one can accomplish the relevant task of setting clear boundaries as to what is included in one's research and what not, in order to make the scope of the research manageable. As a valuable tool for providing some structure into this scoping endeavour, the four criteria put forward by Hansen (2006) in order to achieve this are used for this research. These criteria are represented by the level of analysis, the number of actors, the time frame and the number of events. Although all are represented as separate criteria, in practice they nevertheless strongly depend on and relate to each other.

The criteria of the level of analysis and the number of actors concern themselves with the question of on what level of society the research will focus and on how many actors in that level. Hereby one can for example choose to focus solely on official political statements, on a wider political debate between politicians in parliaments or in the media, on wider political debates between politicians and societal institutions, or specifically on societal actors, such as media outlets, and so on. The range of options for this criterium is therefore

considerably broad, and depending on the specific research goals, it is possible to argue for the best suited level of analysis and number of actors. For our current investigations, the focus will solely be on the discourse employed by the U.S. presidency as a political institution. What this practically means is that speeches and statements by high placed officials from institutions officially falling under the auspices of the U.S. president will be used for the analysis. For this, one should think naturally of the U.S. president himself, but also those high placed officials from the secretary of state, secretary of defense, the attorney general and security institutions such as the CIA.

The choice to focus merely on this one actor is mostly based on the fact that the limited scope of this research is more suited for an in-depth discourse analysis of one actor, rather than a more general overview of the relation between diverging discourses of multiple actors. The choice to focus on the U.S. presidency has subsequently been made by taking into consideration the nature of the issue we are dealing with here. Decision making for the execution of foreign drone strikes namely lies at the level of the U.S. presidency, and as such it is specifically interesting to examine how this actor interprets its own actions and justifies its execution. However, this research will not be confined merely to the official political level by analyzing only official political statements, as might be expected from this choice. Rather, the focus lies on the wider political debate between the U.S. presidency and societal institutions, predominantly represented by the media. This decision is justifiable, for, as we will see, public discourse by the U.S. presidency on its drone campaign has generally been put forward in response to questions by such societal institutions. This nevertheless does not contradict the fact only one actor will be examined, since it is perfectly well feasible to analyze the discourse of one actor in this broader context.

The general time frame that will be used, which is the third of Hansen's criteria, is based on the execution of U.S. drone strikes themselves. As they started to be used in a somewhat substantial degree during the second Bush Administration which lasted from 2005 till 2009, our time frame will start here. The time frame will subsequently end at the end of the second Obama Administration in 2017. The reason for stopping here lies in the fact that it gives us the opportunity conduct the analysis based on a completed presidencies to adhere the discourses to. Our time frame could have been stretched to include the present Trump Administration, since drone attacks are still carried out, but this would inevitably bring along the risk of history overtaking the results of our study quickly in case unforeseen events in the near future will happen.

The last of Hansen's criteria is represented by the number of events. This means the possibility to analyze multiple events at a single moment in time, or to analyze one coherent event throughout time. This research will take the latter approach. It is then important to specify what this event precisely entails, for the usage of drone technology in foreign military campaigns in general can still imply many different things. As such, this research will specifically deal with the execution of targeted drone killings directed at individual targets in foreign countries that are not involved in an official military conflict with the U.S. This approach therefore excludes usage of drones in internationally recognized military campaigns in for example Syria, Libya or Afghanistan. The main reason for excluding these cases lies in the fact that the campaigns in Syria and Libya were initiated by some form of international agreement to interfere (Sanders, 2011; Park, 2017), and in the fact that drone usage in Afghanistan has been an addition to the already ongoing military mission there. In these cases, the usage of drones is thus not the main characteristic of military action.

The execution of targeted drone killings in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, however, do meet this criteria for there is no official military conflict between any of these countries and the U.S. Moreover, by making this distinction, we avoid the difficulty of having to decide whether all applications of drone technology can be headed under the banner of 'one event'. It is namely imaginable that the usage of drones for surveillance during official military conflicts is perceived in a totally different fashion than the execution of targeted drone killings outside of military conflict. The particular choice made therefore guarantees the coherence of the event under examination.

This coherence moreover allows for a discourse analysis divided in cases of time periods, rather than in cases of spatial divisions. As stated before, the broader goal of this research is to understand how American identity develops through time in relation to the technological ability to execute targeted drone killings in foreign countries. For this reason, it is more useful for us to look at how the discourse has evolved throughout time, than to look at the specific cases of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. While this is therefore a legitimate strategy for our research design, we still need to argue in what time periods the larger time frame that was discussed before can be divided. For this, we can best return to the number of drone strikes per presidency and to keep in mind the transitions of the presidencies themselves.

A logical first time slot then is the second Bush Administration that lasted from 2004 till 2009. This is logical for the reason that during this period, the U.S. government started to execute targeted drone killings on the territory of Pakistan, a country with which it was not in

official conflict, on a relatively small scale.[4] The start of the second time slot then coincides with the start of the first Obama Administration. Regarding the statistics on targeted drone strikes, this is also a favorable choice. Following the inauguration of President Obama, the number of targeted drone killings in Pakistan namely strongly increased, but remained limited to this area. The beginning of our third case, however, will not coincide with the start of the second Obama Administration. The reason for this divergence is the fact that since 2011 the focus on Pakistan decreased, with fewer targeted drone killings there, while the activity spread to other countries such as Yemen and Somalia, where the U.S. since then has executed numerous drone attacks. This territorial spreading, however, was simultaneously accompanied by an increased opposition towards the activity. Consequently, it is interesting for our investigations to see whether this development has influenced the discourse of the U.S. presidency in any way. The third time slot will subsequently also be the last one, and will officially therefore continue up till 2017, till the end of the second Obama Administration.

Operationalization

The empirical measurement of discourse on identity and foreign policy is a different endeavor than a more positivistic scientific approach. This is for example the result of a deliberate abstinence from rigid quantifiable measurements or causal identifications on the part of the discourse theories inspired by Foucault. Instead, their aim is more to identify how a certain discourse tries to make sense of an identity or policy. Therefore, this research will not be based on a rigid operationalization of what identity and politics *are*, and the subsequent empirical measurement of them. Rather, the purpose is to identify how actors *give meaning* to these concepts. It is therefore important to note that discourse analysis will be used here in an inductive manner. As such, the analysis will not be conducted by measuring to what extent or how the U.S. government's discourse fits a priori established frames. This will contrarily be done by a close reading of the texts themselves and discerning what patterns emerge from them. This, however, does not mean that everything is open for my own interpretation of the texts, in a fashion that is similar to an 'everything goes' attitude. Inductive discourse analyses use specific operational strategies to uncover the underlying linguistic assumptions that lie hidden in the texts.

[4] For a comprehensive overview of the number of drone attacks per country I again refer to:https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2017-01-01/drone-wars-the-full-data. The numbers that will be used in this part for determining the time slots will be based on these statistics.

The operational strategy for the discourse analysis that will be applied here consists of a number of steps that follow each other in a logical fashion. First the language itself is analyzed. Although this seems rather straightforward for a discourse analysis, in practice this means that the actual words that are being used in the texts will be scrutinized and categorized. The linguistic devices that are of importance here and in which words can be categorized are labels, values, metaphors, concepts and classifications. Of course, this categorization cannot be done with all words in texts, for this would practically be an almost impossible task, while simultaneously not all words would fall under one of the mentioned categories. The applicable linguistic devices rather represent outstanding words which characterize the overall meaning of the text and demonstrate how the actor employing the discourse interprets the meaning of the social world. This is due to the fact that these linguistic devices indicate how someone regards a phenomenon to fit into the broader context of the social world. Regarding a label, which is for example exemplified by the word 'terrorist', this specifically demonstrates how an actor views someone else in relation to social reality, which in the case of a terrorist clearly means the other is viewed as a social pariah. Moreover, a value such as 'right' or 'equality', a concept such as 'security', or a hierarchical classification by means of such words as 'first' or 'highest', also all demonstrate how things relate to each other in one's specific interpretation of the social world.

These linguistic devices, which are mere words when considered in isolation, therefore come to serve as framing devices by determining how these specific phenomena fit into the larger scheme of social reality. Such framing is possible by dividing phenomena in a number of basic categories. First and foremost, as we have already discussed, this can be done by identifying oneself with certain actors and actions which are then included in the constitution of the *'Self'*, while condemning others which are included in the constitution of the '*Other'*. For example, when putting the label of 'terrorist' on an actor, this clearly serves as a framing device to place this actor and its actions in the realm of the 'Other'. Moreover, within these categories of the 'Self' and the 'Other', it is possible to portray actors in a *passive* or *active* sense, whereby attaching to them the *responsibility* to act or not. What this means is for example that a group of people that is considered to be part of the 'Self', is however portrayed as a victimized group which is in need of being 'rescued'. In such a case that group is portrayed in a passive manner, lacking the responsibility to act and stand up for its own. If, on the other hand, the 'Self' is portrayed as a group of actors who all should take action on some issue, all are viewed in an active and responsible manner.

Lastly, a framing device can also serve to *marginalize* or *silence* opposing views that threaten to destabilize the established discourse formation. What this means is that either certain events or views are tried to be shoved aside, for example by emphasizing their irrelevance or contingent nature, or they can be totally denied. The meaning of these instances lies in the unwillingness of the actor to put a certain label or value on them. By doing this, the actor namely indirectly demonstrates that he or she sees no way of incorporating these phenomena into the existing interpretation of social reality, and therefore sees no possibility of framing them in a specific manner. These phenomena therefore demonstrate that they are incongruent with the conventionally established discourses.

A discourse analysis can subsequently interpret these framing strategies and tie them back to their social context in a stronger fashion. When a group is framed in a more passive manner by a social actor, the researcher can for example refer to specific historical circumstances that contributed to this process. From such an interpretation it might then become clear that the discourse is the result of an already longer existing desire to include this group into a specific political community, to give but one example.

For our current research, which specifically deals with the issue of identity, the above mentioned steps of the identification of linguistic devices, framing devices and the contextual interpretation hereof, will be carried out in light of the spatial, temporal and ethical categories of identity construction put forward by Hansen (2006). What this means in practice is that firstly, based on the identification of linguistic devices, the major framing patterns of the discourse will be established. From this, it can for example be concluded that a major theme that emerges from the texts can be 'democracy'. Consequently, it will be established how this theme serves a particular, or multiple framing devices. Democracy can in that case for example serve as a clear division line between the 'Self', constituted by democratic political communities, and the 'Other', who does not adhere to these democratic values. Moreover, it can serve as a way to encourage other democracies to take action and responsibility as well. After all the major themes are examined in such a fashion, the framing devices will be interpret in relation to the spatial, temporal and ethical aspects of U.S. identity construction. To continue with our example, this can mean that democracy is used as a framing device to establish a global spatial democratic identity, based on a desire to reach a future state of global adherence to democratic values based on the ethical belief that global democracy will lead to global peace.

Because we are interested in the historical development of U.S. identity in relation to the emergence of U.S. drone strikes in other sovereign states, this interpretation of the framing

devices in light of identity considerations will moreover be placed in the historical context of U.S. identity and military interventions. This implies that the interpretations of the framing devices will be based on how they react to the priorly established discourses on U.S. identity by the U.S. presidency. In this way, we can chronologically determine how discourse on U.S. identity developed throughout the three cases under scrutiny in the context of U.S. drone strikes.

Selection of primary sources

An adequate primary source selection is of utmost importance for the eventual quality of our discourse analysis. Regarding the primary source selection of this research, it is crucial to keep the before mentioned scope limitations in mind. This means that the primary texts that will be analyzed generally contain statements put forward by U.S. public officials that fall under the auspices of the U.S. presidency, which for example includes in institution such as the CIA as well.

The nature and background of the primary sources will considerably differ. This can for example vary from official public presidential speeches, to speeches by government officials at closed meetings such as at universities or conferences, written documents on the part of the U.S. presidency or quoted statements by officials as documented in news articles or other journalistic documents. The reason for this rather wide variety of sources is twofold. Firstly, it relates to the experience regarding the finding of primary sources as gained on my part doing research on U.S. drone strikes and the U.S. presidency. The noticeable thing here, as we will see during the analysis, is the fact that there is not an abundance of publicly available material on the issue from official presidential sources. As such, it is in some ways unavoidable to use material from a wider variety of sources. The second reason, which is related to the first, is the fact that this reliance on a variety of material does not in any way form an impediment to the adequate execution of our research goals. We namely focus on discourse related to identity construction by the U.S. presidency in general. This means we do not solely have to focus on specific public events such as presidential election debates, to only use sources from a particular institution or newspaper, or to focus on the struggle between two specific discourses. Rather, in light of the inductive manner of our research, we have some more freedom to choose from this wider varieties of sources and discern what patterns emerge generally from all of them, without contaminating the quality of the research.

Regarding the activity of primary source selection itself, this is largely done with practical considerations in mind, which is heavily influenced by the before mentioned fact that public statements of the U.S. presidency on its drone campaigns are not abound. Consequently, the search for primary sources began by delving through some major political, media and societal platforms that potentially provide access to primary sources on the issue. For this, the databases of the *White House Archives*, *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and *C-Span* appeared to be rather fruitful in finding a selection of sources whereby officials from the U.S. presidency responded on the U.S. drone campaigns in the relevant cases for our research.

The search for these documents in the databases of the mentioned platforms was initially executed by searching for the terms 'drone', 'unmanned aerial vehicle' and 'remotely piloted aircraft', which are all synonyms the U.S. presidency uses to define the technology. Furthermore, after the initial finding of primary sources, it became apparent that the U.S. presidency has in many cases been reluctant to use any of the above mentioned terms at all. For that reason, the search was enlarged by using the terms of 'Pakistan', 'Yemen' and 'Somalia' to find sources on these topics. This strategy yielded more sources, albeit including those not specifically related to our topic of targeted drone strikes. For that reason, these sources were judged one by one to see whether they related to our field of inquiry or not. Moreover, in order to enlarge the number of primary sources even further, the references to other statements on the U.S. drone campaigns made in the primary sources found by means of the above mentioned platforms were used to search for them as well. Consequently, the list of primary sources used here also includes a range of speeches given by officials at certain universities or centers that were found in this manner.

Reliability

Regarding the reliability of this research, this is firstly dependent on the manner in which the primary source selection has taken place. When this has for example been executed in a biased manner, by unjustifiably preferring one source type over another, or one specific actor within the U.S. presidency over others, one might rightfully argue that the reliability of the study is endangered. Consequently, due to the fact that for practical reasons our primary source selection could not be executed in a very strict systematic manner, based on a number of priorly selected criteria, one might raise such objections to the execution of this study. However, due to the fact that the treated topic is sensitive in nature as a consequence of its

military character, there was basically no other choice than to execute this study with all the relevant material that was publicly available to us. Nevertheless, even though the primary sources could for that reason not be selected in the most rigorous manner desired, the number of sources found, together with the fact that they stem from a wide variety of actors belonging to the U.S. presidency, allow for the execution of an analysis that adequately complies with all academic standards. It might even be the case that the limited number of public sources available on this issue illuminates something important for the way in which the U.S. presidency had to deal with its novel drone campaigns, as will become clear from the analysis.

Furthermore, the reliability of this study is safeguarded by adhering to the methodological rigidity as elaborated on before. Although the systematic nature of the analysis is different than in positivist research, it is still reliable due to the rigorous manner in which the spatial, temporal and ethical implications of the concepts used by the U.S. presidency are examined in order to identify how these aspects developed or remained stable over time. There is admittedly an interpretative aspect to this type of analysis as well, but the arguments will be illustrated with telling quotes and fitting examples in order to demonstrate their validity. Moreover, this interpretative aspects allows the taking of more distance towards the subject matter as well. In this way, it gives a certain amount of freedom to critically examine the dominant discourse employed by the U.S. presidency.

Limitations

Despite the strengths and contributions of this research, it of course also knows a number of limitations. First, due to the necessary decisions made regarding the research design in order to limit the scope of this research, this study cannot give a complete picture of the wider political and social interaction on the issue of U.S. drone strikes. Consequently, the discourses to which the U.S. presidency had to respond in the three cases under scrutiny cannot be elaborated on. For that reason, this research can only identify a particular historical development of discourse on U.S. identity on behalf of the U.S. presidency in relation to its drone campaigns. What this implies is that in case an interesting historical development is identified, we cannot yet determine whether the inclination for this came from the presidency itself, or was realized under pressure from other oppositional discourses. Additional research could therefore potentially serve as a valuable contribution to this study.

Second, this research has to rely solely on publicly available primary sources. This is in itself no viable reason to reject this study, since it is arguable that the U.S. presidency

particularly has to justify its actions towards its home audience in a public manner. However, it could potentially be interesting as well to see whether the same results are achieved by using a different method, such as an interview-based study. By using such a method, it would moreover be possible to specifically steer the conversation towards those aspects of identity formation which are of importance for our current study.

Lastly, another potential limitation of this research is the fact it solely focuses on U.S. identity in relation to drone strikes. It might be the case that these drone strikes are portrayed in such a manner that they fit the conventional discourse on U.S. identity, in which case this limitation is not of specific importance. It might however also be the case that the analysis demonstrates that U.S. identity shifts and develops through time. In that case, our focus on drone strikes appears to indicate that this phenomenon has *caused* the U.S. identity to change. However, it is important to keep in mind that this research is not aimed at finding any such causal links. Rather, this research is inspired by the fact that the activity of drone strikes seems to fit rather uneasily with the traditional portrayal of U.S. identity based on Modernization Theory. When the analysis therefore establishes that U.S. identity has indeed developed, it is by no means meant to argue that the emergence of the usage of drone strikes has caused this, but more to demonstrate that the identity of the U.S. and its related actions have both gone through changes which allowed for their mutual emergence. Other historical, social or political factors can be of importance here as well, and might stand in a causal relation to one or the other, but this is again beyond the scope of this particular study and left to other potential more positivistic based research to examine.

IV. Analysis

Now the conceptual and methodological aspects how this study have been clearly laid out, they can serve as the basis of the following analysis. In this analysis, a discussion on Modernization Theory will first be provided in order to establish the discourse to which the actors in our examined cases had to respond to. After this, all three cases are dealt with in a chronological order. In each case itself, the major discourse themes that come to the fore from the texts will first be elaborated on, after which an interpretation is provided as to how these themes relate to our overall concern for the formation of identity. By providing such an interpretation of how the U.S. presidency portrays U.S. identity in light of its usage of drone strikes outside of conventional military warzones, it is furthermore possible to examine how this relates to earlier discourses based on Modernization Theory, and how this develops through time in the three cases. From this analysis, it becomes clear that some peculiar developments indeed have taken place.

Modernization Theory

The predominant discourse the U.S. appeals to for foreign military intervention has until recently been the so-called Modernization Theory, as we discussed before. This discourse can therefore say a lot about the way the U.S. is identifying itself and other actors in the international realm. For this reason, it is important to look at the deployment of this discourse in some more detail.

Modernization Theory came to have a profound influence on American foreign and military policy during the 20th century (Latham, 2011). Relevant for the specific course of this development were the experience of the Great Depression and the two World Wars, which led the U.S. to regard the world as highly interconnected, whereby its own security depended on a shared adherence to the liberal values around the globe (Ibid., 2011). The global context in the second half of the 20th century, defined by decolonization processes and the tensions of the Cold War, subsequently determined the U.S.'s emphasis on the necessity for global liberal development, for the Soviet Union provided the world with a fundamentally different version

of dialectical change for the decolonizing world, which threatened the core U.S. beliefs in liberal values and global structural security (Klein, 2003). In this way, the U.S. managed to secure its foreign interests by referring to a discourse of social scientific development instead of blunt imperialism, notwithstanding many of the common underlying assumptions of both (Ibid., 2003). In practice, the U.S. initially persuaded decolonized states take part in extensive development planning programs, aimed at increasing national production and living standard, which were abandoned in the neo-liberal age of the 1980's at the expense of the imposition of capitalistic markets to enforce prosperity, democracy and international security (Latham, 2011).

During the 1990's, under the influence of the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, this belief in the power of emerging capitalist democracies persisted. The U.S. refrained from imposing large-scale developmental programs, but continued to belief in the idea that global development served their security interests (Ibid., 2011). Emphasis was now mostly put on 'failed states', which were regarded as not properly modernized and which could enable the dispersion of such forces as terrorism or ethnic conflict, in a similar manner to which during the Cold War development was needed to obstruct the spreading of Communism (Ibid., 2011). This course of action was, however, now only more selectively chosen, for there was a growing belief after the Cold War that history would unfold itself by inevitably developing towards modernity (Latham, 2011).[5] The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 however in a way awoke the U.S. in a radical way from its historical slumber. The U.S. came to realize again that its security was in many ways dependent on its own active global behavior, leading to military invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq. For our investigations, it is then important to realize on what grounds the U.S. justified these interventions. A first thing that is noticeable when analyzing this, is the fact the U.S. for some reason could not merely use the 9/11 attacks as a justification to respond in a military fashion. Rather, the conventional arguments related to the modernization discourse were appealed to again: by means of military intervention, the U.S. could lead the Iraqi society and the wider world towards freedom and get rid of the forces that impeded this progression (Wertheim, 2010). It is in many ways therefore not surprising that in the end the U.S. in both cases ended up in long and costly humanitarian and nation-building projects (Cottey, 2008).

[5] This vision is in many ways related to the famous declaration of the 'end of history' by Francis Fukuyama (1991). Although it would be somewhat of an exaggeration to state that this was the general perspective in the 1990's, it is nevertheless a telling example of the influence of the more general discourse of historical progress towards modernity.

When we look at this general pattern of discourse on the identity of the U.S. 'Self' from the perspective of the three categories of identity construction, we can see that the U.S. throughout history has firstly perceived itself as part of the Western, developed and liberal world. In addition, however, the U.S. has also seen itself as the actor that has progressed the furthest along the developmental line of history, and as a powerful actor, bears a responsibility to itself and the world to bring others on the right track towards modernity as well. It is interesting to note that in this discourse, all the aspects are identifiable that we before mentioned as important for justifying military intervention based on identity formation. In fact, by enlarging the American 'Self' towards the world and all its actors who strive for a future of 'liberal freedom', this discourse has proven to be highly efficient for excluding any dissident voices, apart from criticism on the means by which this goal has tried to be sought after. The burden of costly nation-building programs were arguably in a sense thus the price the U.S. had to pay for this extremely effective discourse. With the emergence of technology to carry out drone attacks in other states, this situation however considerably changed.

Case I. Bush Administration, 2005-2009 – Pakistan

The historical overview that was sketched above gives a well established sense of the historical context in which the U.S. started to use drone strikes outside of conventional officially recognized military battlefields. From it, it becomes clear that at the time that the U.S. decided that it would start targeting individuals in Pakistan by means of drones, official discourse on justification for military intervention was focused on the official interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and was strongly based on the more conventional arguments related to Modernization Theory. Since the military campaign of drone strikes in Pakistan was however the result of fighting an enemy who is much more spatially dispersed in comparison to military components fought in the past and who does not adhere to traditional state borders, it was questionable whether this conventional discourse could adequately address the new military challenges. The discourse deployed by the U.S. presidency during the second Bush Administration arguably demonstrates this tension, and as such hints at the necessity of a change in discourse that suits the usage of military action outside of traditional spatial military warzones.

Discourse Themes

The first thing that is noticeable when keeping this tension in mind is the manner in which the word 'drone' itself is used by the U.S. presidency: or rather, its reluctance to use the word whatsoever. In practically all public statements by officials from the presidency in this time period on the relations with Pakistan, the word 'drone' or any synonym which might be used for it is not used.[6] Given the secrecy awarded to the activity of drone strikes, this might be the result of a strategy to not create the potential of public upheaval based on a military activity that is not known publicly in the first place. However, there seems to be more going on based on facts that disprove this perspective. Eventually, information on U.S. drone strikes on Pakistani soil namely reached U.S. journalists, who started asking questions based on these 'rumors' (Mulrine, 2008). One such instance was a question by a journalist about an alleged U.S. drone strike in Pakistan supposedly killing an Al-Qaeda member, to which then U.S. National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley responded:

> *'We've obviously been supporting Pakistan. President Musharraf has been very aggressive in dealing with the Al Qaeda and Taliban presence in Pakistan. We have helped him in terms of providing intelligence and cooperating with his forces, and obviously this is something that would be an important thing for Pakistan, important thing for the United States'* (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, n.d.: para. 5).

We can see here that instead of directly responding to the suspicions of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, Hadley shifts his discourse to a more general level of 'supporting Pakistan' by means of 'providing intelligence' and 'cooperating with his forces'. In hierarchical terms, these words imply a classification of being each other's equals in a joint fight. As such, Hadley appears to be purposively avoiding the term 'drone' for it could disturb this insistence on equal participation, by shifting emphasis to unilateral U.S. action by means of drone strikes above foreign soil. This claim is substantiated by a New York Times article on the subject. In it, two civil servants of the U.S. presidency confirm that a specific drone strike has been carried out under the order of the U.S. government, but they themselves have to stay anonymous 'because of the political and diplomatic sensitivities of attacking targets in Pakistan' (Myers, 2008). Consequently, it is a grounded interpretation that the discursive

[6] The U.S. presidency tends to prefer other terms than the word 'drone'. These terms are for example 'unmanned aerial vehicle' or 'remotely piloted airplane'.

strategy of *silencing* has been applied by the Bush Administration in order to resolve the tension of militarily responding to a more fluid opponent.

Related to this general strategy of silencing, the primary texts demonstrate another major theme surrounding the concept of '*sovereignty*'. As we have seen, Hadley's discursive strategies were aimed at the creation of a to a large extent equal playing field of states participating in this particular issue. When analyzing further discourse from the primary sources, this view is confirmed. The manner in which the U.S. presidency tends to justify its military interventions against a more diffused enemy is by calling on global support from governments in a global 'war on terror'. In this way, regarding the specific topic of the relation between the U.S. and Pakistan, President Bush for example emphasizes the fact that the two countries are in a cooperation and support each other, whereby the U.S. continuously recognizes the sovereignty of their Pakistani allies (Bush, 2008a). This theme of support and cooperation is regularly deployed in function of creating a 'Self' which is larger than merely the U.S., but rather encompasses the whole range of global sovereign governments who support each other in this global war, and who recognize that one's own security depends on the actions of all. Telling in this regard is a quote by President Bush, stating:

> *'In this war on terror America is not alone. Many governments have awaken to the dangers we share and have begun to take serious action. Global terror requires a global response. And America is more secure today because dozens of other countries have stepped up to the fight. We're more secure because Pakistani forces captured more than 100 extremists across the country last year, including operatives who were plotting attacks against the United States. We're more secure because Britain arrested an al Qaeda operative who had provided detailed casing reports on American targets to senior al Qaeda leaders'* (Bush, 2005: 8:45).

What this quote, among others, clearly demonstrates is the focus on the interdependence of states for the provision of their security. Not only does the U.S. presidency say that it acknowledges the sovereignty of Pakistan in the military actions it takes, but it actually stresses the importance of the actions of the Pakistani government for its own security: thanks to Pakistan, the U.S. is more secure. 'Global terror requires a global response' here therefore does not imply a global response by the U.S. alone; it implies the voluntary but necessary joint effort of global sovereign governments against their common foe.

In addition to these themes, the U.S. presidency also referred strongly to the concepts of '*freedom*' and '*democracy*'. In fact, President Bush put forward the perspective that the political leaders of its alleged allies had to 'understand the stakes in the struggle, in the ideological struggle of the 21st century' (Bush, 2006d: 4:04). Bush then framed this ideological struggle mostly as a battle between pro and anti-democratic forces. Important for him in this regard is his conviction of the relationship between democracy and peace. For Bush, 'democracy has the capacity to turn enemies into allies and cause, kind of, warring factions to come together' (Bush, 2006b: 34:32). By putting forward this perspective, the U.S. presidency was able to ethically justify its military activities in Pakistan by referring to it as a necessary step towards freedom and democracy, which is for him the same as a step towards peace. As such, in cases of frictions with Pakistan about U.S. military involvement, the U.S. presidency always had the ability to refer to Pakistan's necessary development towards more freedom and democracy as a justification for this involvement. In this light, President Bush states:

> *'The United States is also using our influence to urge valued partners like Egypt and Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to move toward freedom. These nations have taken brave stands and strong action to confront extremists, along with some steps to expand liberty and transparency. Yet they have a great distance still to travel. The United States will continue to press nations like these to open up their political systems and give greater voice to their people. Inevitably, this creates tension. But our relationships with these countries are broad enough and deep enough to bear it. As our relationships with South Korea and Taiwan during the cold war prove, America can maintain a friendship and push a nation toward democracy at the same time'* (Bush, 2007: 19:21).

As this quote demonstrates, the U.S. presidency regards Pakistan here as a 'valued partner', in line with the former discussion on the U.S.' emphasis on sovereignty. However, Bush simultaneously acknowledges here that Pakistan still has 'a great distance to travel.' The military involvement in Pakistan is thus admittedly regarded as posing a balancing game between on the one hand treating Pakistan as an equal ally, while on the other hand reserving the right to 'push' it in a certain direction, whereby this direction is ethically justified by the belief in democracy, freedom and peace. In this manner, the military involvement in Pakistan is portrayed as a means to the end goal of democracy. What this ultimately arguably

demonstrates, is the fact that Bush' conception of the importance of upholding sovereignty is largely dependent on the specific interpretation of this concept by the particular governments themselves.

We have thus identified silencing, sovereignty and democracy as the major themes of the discourse employed by the U.S. presidency during the second Bush Administration in relation to its drone strikes in Pakistan. As the aim of this analysis is to illuminate how such drone strikes are related to developments in U.S. identity, the next section will specifically deal with the spatial, temporal and ethical components of identity formation in light of these identified major discourse themes.

Identity formation

As we discussed in our theoretical reflections, the deployment of a specific discourse by an actor reveals much about the way it makes sense of the world and its place within that world. Consequently, the former identification of some major themes dominating the discourse on U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan by the U.S. presidency under the second Bush Administration potentially can reveal to us a great amount of information on how this actor regarded its specific place in the world in relation to this type of action.

Beginning then with the spatial component of identity formation, it is firstly clear that both of the juxtaposed identities – the 'Self' and the 'Other' – are global in nature. Rather than an opposition between two geographically defined areas such as is the case in a conventional war between two territorial states, the opposition is more characterized by a division between an orderly global system of legitimate sovereign states and an unconventional opponent who is much more fluid in nature. Much of the tension the U.S. presidency sees itself faced with is therefore related to the problem of how to deal with these two seemingly incompatible notions. In addition to this more general division, however, we distinguished another spatial component. While the importance of sovereignty was strongly emphasized, it however did not possess an absolute quality. A division was also detectable inside of the grouping of sovereign states between those adhering to values based on democracy and freedom, and those who lacked this quality. In this manner, part of the seemingly contradictory notion of sovereignty and global fluidity could be elevated by referring to an inherent quality that should come simultaneously with the responsibility of sovereignty.

The temporal component, subsequently, becomes most apparent from the inherent quality attached to the values of freedom and democracy. Although history is not strongly portrayed as a necessary linear progression towards liberal values per se, it is nevertheless stressed that once a state of democracy and freedom is reached in all states, peace will inevitably follow, since democracies are believed to wage no war with each other. In arguing about this issue, President Bush referred to historical examples to demonstrate the validity of this point, stating:

> *'I reject that notion that freedom is only available to some of us. I believe liberty is universally desired. And I know it's in our interest to help democracy spread. I like to remind people about this historical parallel, and I've used it a lot. You've probably have heard it, so I beg your pardon for bringing it up again. But it's important for me to connect the idea of laying the foundation for peace with reality, and that reality is what we see in Europe today. There were two major world wars in Europe in the 1990s - I mean, the 1900s. And today, Europe is free and whole and at peace. And a lot of that has to do with the fact that the nations of Europe are democracies. Democracies don't wage war'* (Bush, 2006b: 33:14).

The temporal aspect of identity put forward here is thus not one representing the U.S. as a leading actor in the world on the edge of historical progression, but rather as one of the many democracies who are in peaceful relations with each other. The temporal component lies thus mainly in the theoretical considerations of the concept of democracy itself, which can then be realized in the real world – as exemplified by the historical example of Europe. This means it does not reside in reality itself, which is only represented as the sphere in which these theoretical considerations can be actualized. Nevertheless, this still means that a potential utopian state of global peace can be reached when the theory is properly applied.

The ethical aspect of identity formation is related to what one's interpretation is of whether one has a responsibility to act and subsequently on what that action should entail. As such, it is to a large extent interlinked with the spatial and temporal aspects of one's identity. In this case, it is namely the fact that the U.S. bears upon itself the responsibility and ethical legitimacy to act militarily in Pakistan based on the fact that spatially it is a legitimate sovereign actor 'helping' a partner on its way to fully acknowledged sovereignty, while simultaneously providing the wider global political order, including the U.S. itself, with an increased sense of security. As we discussed, this presented the U.S. presidency with a

possibility to avoid the felt tension of acting militarily against a more dispersed opponent.

However, the ethical component entails an additional element as well, which is represented by the ethical justification for the precise manner in which the action is executed. It is here that we encounter most directly the technological military drone innovations which enabled the U.S. presidency to use drone strikes against targets in Pakistan. However, it is also precisely on this point that the U.S. presidency kept silent. Consequently, we can arguably claim that the employment of drone strikes represented a form of action which could not adequately fit the rest of the framework of identity formation. The deployment of unilateral lethal drone strikes appears to have been incompatible with a discourse based on sovereignty, alliance, cooperation and support. As a result, the discursive strategy of silencing on the usage of drone technology to execute targeted strikes appears to be a logical and inevitable result. The only way in which this tension was partially resolved was through justifying some form of unilateral action by referring to Pakistan's lack of freedom and democracy. However, how drone strikes could specifically serve the purpose of developing Pakistan towards these values remains unclear for us, as it was, in light of the strategy of silencing, arguably for the U.S. presidency as well.

When looking at how these identity consideration relate to the earlier discussion on Modernization Theory, it is possible to detect many similarities in an albeit slightly adjusted form. What is noticeable then is the fact that the U.S. is less portrayed as the leading figure in the world, but that the traditional characteristics related to liberal democracy are. Spatially, the world is less divided between diverging camps of countries, of which the U.S. is the leader of the liberal one, but more as a division between the established nation state system and an unconventional, fluid opponent. Temporarily, the discourse subsequently remains highly indebted to Modernization Theory and its belief in the power of freedom and democracy to bring world peace in the future. As such, the simultaneous focus on the legitimacy of the political sovereignty of nation states, and a hierarchical division between those states, creates a tension which Modernization Theory did not know, for it clearly separated states in a spatial manner as well. Ethically, this meant for discourse based on Modernization Theory that unilateral military intervention could well be justified based on others' lack of democratic values. Now with the introduction of the emphasis on sovereignty, however, this option was no longer viable. Consequently, after being confronted with reports on unilateral U.S. action in Pakistan by means of drone strikes, all the officials from the U.S. presidency could say was that they were 'stressing' Pakistan to move towards freedom, while remaining silent on the drone strikes themselves.

By adjusting certain parts of the conventional discourse of Modernization Theory, while remaining to rely on other parts of the same discourse, the discourse therefore appears to have been brought somewhat out of balance. In the following case, it is possible to detect an ongoing struggle with this imbalance. In it, the U.S. presidency puts forward rather different discursive strategies of trying to make sense of its usage of drone strikes on the soil of its 'ally' Pakistan.

Case II. Obama Administration, 2009-2011 – Pakistan

After the second Bush Administration ended and President Obama rose to power in 2009, the policy on drone strikes in other sovereign states did not considerably change in relation to the places they were executed: this remained mostly limited to Pakistan. However, the number of drone strikes in Pakistan did increase relatively fast. This lasted till about 2011, after which the numbers in Pakistan slowly decreased again, and the execution of U.S. drone strikes was spread to other states as well. Due to the higher number of drone strikes, and the longer period in which this strategy was now used, questions by other institutions nevertheless arose on the justifiability of this type of action. Consequently, as we will see, discourse by the U.S. presidency somewhat changed since it had to deal more directly with the issue of drones.

Discourse Themes

The primary sources demonstrate that one major discourse theme from the former case is detectable in this second case as well: namely, the discursive strategy of *silencing*. This fact is noticeable in a number of ways. Firstly, many sources that directly or indirectly deal with the issue of military intervention or U.S. – Pakistani relations are reluctant to use the word 'drone' or any other synonym. In a speech after being awarded the Nobel peace prize, Barrack Obama for example acknowledges the new situation of a more globally dispersed and technologically advanced adversary, against which force may be necessary (Obama, 2009a). Nevertheless, he does not mention the possibility of using drones for this purpose on any occasion in the speech. Secondly, on multiple official meetings between White House officials and journalists, questions about the usage of drone technology were refused to being answered in any particular way (Mullen, 2009b; Wood, 2009; McChrystal, 2010). Thirdly,

similar to what we saw in the former case, officials again reported anonymously to journalists about the execution of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan (Shane and Schmitt, 2010). Taking all these three features in mind, the continuous deployment of silencing as a discursive strategy clearly comes to the fore.

Nevertheless, there is an apparent break with this strategy identifiable as well. On multiple public occasions, officials from the U.S. presidency namely referred specifically to the execution of drone strikes in Pakistan in this period. It is remarkable to note, then, that when this happens, discourse tends to revolve solely around the perceived *legality* of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan. A returning argument is for example their conformity to the laws of war, characterized by the 'principle of distinction' and the 'principle of proportionality', which the technology of drone strikes can guarantee (Koh, 2010: para. 67-68). Also, it is in this regard stressed that the execution of drone strikes in other countries is an instance of U.S. self-defense, and is therefore in compliance with the laws of war. The importance attached to legal values becomes furthermore apparent by multiple speeches of President Obama, in which he stresses the central place of the Rule of Law in the identity of the U.S. in the present and in its history. For this reason, he warns that political and military strategies which compromise the adherence to the Rule of Law run the risk of causing a loss of self-identity for they 'compromise the very ideals we try to defend' (Obama, 2009b: para. 30).

A relevant inference we can draw from this emphasis on legal values is the recognition that the U.S. presidency here does not regard its usage of drone strikes in Pakistan as a radical new type of action; meaning that the traditional discourse would have become obsolete in light of the novelty of this action. Indeed, it merely regards it as relevant whether or not the strategy based on drone strikes adheres to conventional rules of conduct as set up in the laws of war. The following statement made by Koh demonstrates this vision:

> *'[T]he rules that govern targeting do not turn on the type of weapon system used, and there is no prohibition under the laws of war on the use of technologically advanced weapons systems in armed conflict – such as pilotless aircraft or so-called smart bombs – so long as they are employed in conformity with applicable law'* (Koh, 2010: para. 72).

For Koh, technological innovation is thus not related to the international laws that govern the conduct of warfare; the rules apply at all times, regardless of the technologies used. That this is the wider perspective of the U.S. presidency in this time period becomes apparent as well

when analyzing how officials generally respond to questions on the issue by journalists. Often, they argue they cannot respond to the issue for it concerns operational manners (Morrell, 2010). This perspective, again, regards drone strikes to merely concern the conduct of warfare and the laws regulating that.

A last theme that comes to the fore when analyzing the employed discourse is the emphasis on the need for *support from the Pakistani people and government*. Repeatedly, officials stress the importance of Pakistani support, since excessive unilateral action brings the risk of a backlash on behalf of the Pakistani's. President Obama for example claims that past U.S. military involvement in Pakistan had created local grievances, and even that the U.S. is creating more terrorists when it is not abiding by the rules (Obama, 2009a). For this reason, it is stressed that the military strategy should be based on a conviction to spread the message to Pakistani's that America's 'interests are theirs' as well as on the understanding that the U.S. 'can't help Pakistan more than they want to be helped' (Olson, 2009: 47:30).

Identity Formation

As the major discourse themes revolve around silencing and legal considerations, it becomes apparent that regarding discursive identity formation, the presidency has predominantly focused on the ethical aspect of it. That is to say, by stressing the legality of the execution of this type of action, it is trying to justify its drone strikes in Pakistan based on ethical considerations that accompany it, as for example represented by its perceived proportionality. However, when the U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan are considered from the wider perspective of identity formation, by including the spatial and temporal aspect as well, it is possible to see this focus on legal issues and ethical considerations to be part of the silencing strategy as well. By merely portraying this type of action as a technological issue, as Koh (2010) was trying to do, it namely serves the additional purpose of not having to deal with the spatial and temporal aspects of identity. In this way, solely stating that the action fits in the conventional ethical frameworks of action forecloses the possibility for discussing how this type of action fits into wider perceptions of U.S. identity.

The claim that this emphasis on legality and the ethical side of identity is indeed more a strategy of silencing the spatial and temporal side of identity rather than an addition to them, becomes clear when one realizes that the discourse employed by officials from the U.S. presidency barely mentions these spatial and temporal aspects. However, in the analysis of the former case of the Bush Administration, it was established that it was precisely a tension

between the spatial and temporal sides of identity – namely the tension between the spatial division of the nation state system in opposition to a more fluid opponent, and the temporal division of democratic states in opposition to non-democratic ones – which had led to its overall imbalance. Consequently, officials from the Obama Administration, during the time under scrutiny here, could make claims about the adherence of U.S. drone strikes to the laws of war, without having to deal with the fact that these strikes took place outside of conventional or officially recognized war zones. Questions in any form on how these strikes related to the overall international political landscape, or on what their transformative abilities through time could be, were therefore avoided.

The additional discourse theme of winning the support of the Pakistani people and the Pakistani government is also more related to the ethical side of identity formation, than to its spatial and temporal sides. Although it does in some way relate to spatial and temporal considerations by making a distinction between terrorists and the Pakistani people and government, and by referring to potential local backlash against U.S. military action, it nevertheless firmly takes the drone strikes as its starting point. This for example appears from the fact that it is believed that playing by the legal rules, to which drone strikes comply according to the U.S. presidency, is the strategy to win over the local population (Obama, 2009a). Only the former use of excessive force is portrayed as to be the cause of these local grievances (Ibid., 2009a). This way, once more, the discussion is not focused on the question of whether the use of force is justified in the first place, but rather on what kind of force is ethically justified. Here again, therefore, the spatial and temporal aspects of identity formation are mostly neglected.

In this second case, discourse has thus considerably changed in comparison to the former case of the Bush Administration and the earlier Modernization Theory. Although, in light of the rising number of U.S. drone strikes executed in Pakistan, discourse had dealt more directly with drone strikes themselves and the ethical aspect of it, this however served as a way to silence the spatial and temporal aspects of identity. This situation is therefore in a way a precise reversal of the former case, in which the ethical aspect of identity was silenced, while the spatial and temporal aspects were clearly put forward. As Modernization Theory was moreover mostly present in the temporality of U.S. identity under the Bush Administration, the current omission of this temporal side also means that Modernization Theory has almost completely been eradicated from the dominant discourse employed by the U.S. presidency on its drone strikes in Pakistan.

This sole focus on the ethical side of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan in relation to U.S. identity might had sufficed had this action been limited to this area alone. Soon, however, the execution of drone strikes spread to other countries as well. Consequently, the lack of a spatial and temporal aspect for justifying the basic execution of this type of military involvement in other sovereign states by the U.S. could potentially pose a greater problem. Moreover, due to the tension between the spatial and temporal sides of U.S. identity in the older discourse on U.S. drone strikes under the Bush Administration, the Obama Administration would have to come up with some original portrayals of U.S. identity in order to let all three facets of identity formation by in harmony with each other. After the U.S. presidency decided to spread its unilateral execution of drone strikes to Yemen and Somalia as well in 2011, these issues indeed presented themselves to the presidency.

Case III. Obama Administrations, 2011-2017 – Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia

From 2011 onwards, the first Obama Administration decided to decrease the number of drone strikes on Pakistani territory, but simultaneously to increase the number in other areas. For our investigations, the spreading of U.S. drone strikes towards Yemen and Somalia, in addition to the ongoing strikes in Pakistan, are particularly important, since they represent unilateral foreign military interference on behalf of the U.S. in other sovereign states, outside of official conventional warzones or battlefield. In relation to this spreading of the activity, more domestic oppositional voices surfaced that challenged this strategy by the U.S. presidency. Consequently, we will see in this case, even more than in the former, that the presidency had to publicly deal specifically and in more detail with its drone policies and its relation to U.S. identity. Moreover, as will be demonstrated, the discourse employed for doing this again remarkably changed in comparison to the former case.

Discourse Themes

It is quite noticeable that the spreading of U.S. drone strikes to other countries such as Yemen and Somalia has been accompanied by shifting in discourse on the issue on the hand of the U.S. presidency. What firstly stands out as an important theme which frames the usage of

U.S. drone strikes is the notion of '*wise leadership*'. What this broadly implies is a learning from past mistakes and an adoption to new challenges. The U.S. is framed as an actor that has to be smart, wise and strategic (Brennan, 2011). The complexity of the modern circumstances of unconventional wars is regularly deployed as an argument for this insistence on wise conduct (Johnson, 2012). As a consequence, the behavior of the U.S. is often compared to the conduct of a surgeon. Officials subsequently praise the technology of drone strikes for its precision and effectiveness. John Brennan for example states that '[i]ts this surgical precision, the ability, with laser-like focus, to eliminate the cancerous tumor called an Al-Qaeda terrorist while limiting damage to the tissue around it, that makes this counterterrorism tool so essential' (Brennan, 2012: para. 49).

It is relevant in this regard that U.S. officials at this time period looked at the U.S. as the global leader who bears the responsibility to act on a global scale. And although this leadership has to be based on wisdom and smartness, it is also firmly grounded that this means that force may be necessary. In his 2015 State of the Union speech, President Obama for example states that the U.S. 'stand[s] united with people around the world who have been targeted by terrorists … We will continue to hunt down terrorists and dismantle their networks, and we reserve the right to act unilaterally, as we have done relentlessly since I took office to take out terrorists who pose a direct threat to us and our allies' (Obama, 2015a: para. 55).

Much focus is then awarded to the question of how to responsibly deal with this power. On multiple occasions, President Obama stresses the inevitable presence of *evil* in the world, which is inherent from the imperfect being of human nature (Obama, 2013b; Obama, 2015a). For him, then, the special characteristic of the U.S. is the ability to confront these imperfections that are present in the self and to learn from them. He states:

> *'[O]ne of the things that sets America apart from many other nations, one of the things that makes us exceptional is our willingness to confront squarely our imperfections and to learn from our mistakes'* (Obama, 2015b: para. 8).

The U.S. presidency thus sends forward a picture of reality in which the U.S., as the most powerful nation in the world, has to deal with the inevitable presence of evil in a wise manner. The particular portrayal of this power is mostly based on the burden and difficulties which this kind of power brings with it, and the therefore necessary constraint of power. On the one hand, these statements are made in relation to U.S. concerns of compromising democratic

values of transparency and accountability at home (Obama, 2016b). On the other hand, however, they are also made out of concern for foreign reactions, which potentially can come from local grievances or the backlash that may follow once other countries can use drone strikes as well (Brennan, 2012a). For this reason, the moral component of the execution of drone strikes is repeatedly stressed, since this weapon represents this particular kind of responsible execution of power (Ibid., 2012b).

In addition to the discourse themes of wise leadership in light of inevitable evil, there is a continuous focus on the importance of *legal values* for U.S. identity. On multiple occasion, officials stress the central role that the Rule of Law plays in the self-image of the U.S. and all Americans. To strengthen this view, there is a continuous reference to the Founding Fathers and their efforts to base U.S. political power on the constitution (Johnson, 2012). Particularly important here is the insistence on the view that securing America's future freedom is not dependent on a relentless pursuit of security by whatever means, but is dependent on America's adherence to its constitutional legal values, the values that have safeguarded this freedom since the founding fathers (Obama, 2013b). On top of this, we find the same legal arguments here as we found in our former case: emphasizing the compliance of drone strikes to the laws of war, and an additional appraisal of drone strikes for their ability to make the messy conduct of war even more effective and proportional (Brennan, 2011)

A last major theme that is detectable in the discourse on drone strikes is moreover a line of argumentation based on the identification of states as being '*unable*' or '*unwilling*' to adequately deal with the 'terrorists' residing inside their territory. Regarding this issue, officials first tend to emphasize the importance of cooperation with other states and refer to the concept of sovereignty as a legal constraint on the actions of the U.S. (Brennan, 2012a). Thereafter, however, they proceed to argue that some countries are simply 'unwilling' or 'unable' to deal with the global threat that terrorists pose who can find safe places to hide inside of their territories (Hayden, 2012; Panetta, 2012). Consequently, the perspective of the U.S. presidency on its ability to act internationally in a militaristic interventionist way by means of drone strikes is also affected by this. In fact, it leads President Obama to the conviction that the U.S. has 'the right to act unilaterally' in such international affairs (Obama, 2015a). As such, we can see that the U.S. presidency has found a novel perspective on the justification for its usage of drone strikes in other states.

Identity Formation

As these major discourse themes demonstrate, the identity formations in this case have developed again in comparison to the former cases. Specifically important is the fact these discourse themes cover a much broader understanding of the social world than the sole emphasis on legality, as the discourse in the former case tended to do. Consequently, the discourse employed by the U.S. presidency in the current case covers all three facets of identity formation, as this interpretation demonstrates

First, regarding the spatial component of identity formation, it is apparent that the spatial tension identified in the first case has returned here. Again, there is the issue of the coexistence of a global order of sovereign nation states in the face of a more fluid and dispersed opponent. However, as we saw in the first case, this creates the necessity of a hierarchical division of sovereignty, since unilateral foreign military action inevitably violates the sovereignty of the other state. Under Bush, this was largely done by incorporating the temporal aspect of identity based on democracy, in order to create a division between democratic and non-democratic states. Here, however, these temporal considerations are left aside, and emphasis is instead put on the ability of other states to act against this unconventional opponent. In case another state does not adequately deal with internal forces that pose a threat to the international global order of nation states, and specifically to the U.S. of course, this state is portrayed as either unable or unwilling to deal with these forces. Consequently, a hierarchical division is made between states able and willing to deal with internal forces that might threaten their own political order or others, and states not able or willing to do this.

Although this spatial division between states is thus no longer predominantly based on the temporal aspects inherent to the transformative potentials of democracy towards peace, temporality nevertheless remains important and is still related to it. We have namely seen that temporality is mostly determined by the discourse theme of the presence of ‘evil’. This presence is taken as a basic fact of human life, and no utopian illusions are made that a state of global peace is within our reach. However, it is claimed that the U.S. is set apart from many other states based on the fact that it is willing to acknowledge and face its own evilness, and to grow and become better through time by learning from this. Other states who are unable or unwilling to confront evil, therefore either have rejected to learn, or have not been developed enough to be able to learn. Consequently, the U.S. is portrayed as an experienced state in dealing with evil, from which it reserves the right to act unilaterally in the world, since it knows how to deal wisely with these evil forces.

This insistence on the U.S.' ability to deal with evil in a wise manner is, in its turn, strongly related to the ethical facet of identity formation. When on the one hand discourse by the U.S. presidency portrays the U.S. as a wise actor, and on the other hand as the strongest nation state in the world, the only logical consequence is that the U.S. should act as its 'wise leader'. The presidency portrays this situation in a way as if, were the U.S. to refuse this role as the global leader bearing global responsibility, it would be acting in an unethical manner. It is for this reason the presidency portrays the responsibility of acting globally against evil as the burden that comes with the role of being the sole global superpower. While this emphasis on the role of the U.S. to be the wise leader in the world partly stems from the complexities of the modern world and the ability of the U.S. to deal with those, the issue of legality returns here as well. The U.S. is viewed as a stable state that since the time of its Founding Fathers has preserved this stability by adhering to the legal values captured in the U.S. constitution. In this way, the presidency portrays the U.S. as a reliable international actor whose actions are fundamentally based on legal considerations. The activity of drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia itself is therefore again framed in terms of legality. However, this is not done anymore by solely focusing on this, without mentioning wider spatial or temporal implications, but more as part of the wider strategy of U.S. wise leadership in a complex modern world where evil is inevitably present. U.S. adherence to its own legal values can then guarantee a situation in which the responsible leadership of the U.S. can serve as a beacon for the upholding of freedom in the modern world (Obama, 2013a).

In comparison to the former two cases and the broader discourse of Modernization Theory, the discourse employed in this case thus fundamentally differs from all those former discourses, but also continuous to use certain aspects of them. Regarding the spatial component of identity formation, it is detectable that the theme of a global system of nation states against a more fluid opponent did return, as it was already present in the first case of the Bush Administration. However, as a way of resolving the tension between these two features, the traditional reliance on Modernization Theory and its belief in the transformative capacities of democracy towards peace, has been abandoned. Unlike the Bush Administration in the first case, a division is not made between democratic and non-democratic states, but rather between states willing and able to deal with the evil forces in the world, and the states unwilling and unable to do this. The temporal side of identity relevant for this is therefore on the one hand the a-temporal presence of evil in the human world, and on the other hand the ability of some actors to acquire through time the capabilities of dealing with such evil by

willing to acknowledge and face this evil. This is a rather new type of temporal discourse which was not detectable in the former discourses we examined.

Regarding the ethical facet of identity formation, there is an interesting blend of new discursive features, and features stemming from former discourses. First, the new temporal perspective on identity in light of evil and the related spatial focus on unwilling and unable states allowed the U.S. presidency to portray the U.S. unequivocally as the wise leader of the world, allowed to take unilateral action. Nevertheless, for the exact way in which to execute this wise leadership, ethical considerations from the former case, as well as from Modernization Theory, have returned again. First, the adherence to legal values has been, as we have seen, a recurring theme. However, what is perhaps most interesting is the fact that the broad developmental plans, which were so characteristic of Modernization Theory, also surfaced again in certain forms. This is specifically visible when comparing the approach to unwilling and unable states.

Pakistan was generally framed as a state unwilling to deal with its internal evil forces. Struggles with Pakistan, therefore, were mostly framed as difficulties in dealing with a country that is unwilling to critically look at its own shortcomings (Hayden, 2012; Panetta, 2012). Consequently, when logically following the dominant discourse, the U.S. presidency regarded its unilateral drone strikes in Pakistan as justified for this activity fits in the overall framework of wise U.S. global leadership. For executing drone strikes in unwilling states, the legal considerations of this type of action has therefore been significant.

Yemen and Somalia, on the other hand, were mostly pictured as weaker states unable to act (Brennan, 2012b). What is interesting to note here, then, is the fact that legal considerations seem to have been of less importance in relation to this category of states. After all, it is hard to imagine how a sole focus on the legality of drone strikes in such unable states would potentially give them the capabilities to deal with their internal evil forces themselves. In the case of unwilling states, the increase of U.S. interference by means of drone strikes might serve as an incentive to start willing to combat evil, since they had a choice in the first place. With unable states, on the other hand, this choice was never there. As a result, discourse on justifying drone strikes in those countries was constantly accompanied by references to larger frameworks of political and social aid. It was for example stressed that drone strikes should only be perceived as part of larger developmental plans that encompass political, economic and humanitarian support (Ibid., 2012b). Here, we thus see the reintroduction of the large scale developmental plans that constituted large parts of the ethical sides of identity formation in the discourse on Modernization Theory. Now, however, these

plans are no longer part of the acceleration of history towards a future state of democratic peace, but rather of the development towards a situation in which all states are able and willing to face the evil that is inherently present in the human world.

Conclusion

The main aim of this research has been to establish how the U.S. presidency has framed the relation between its usage of drone strikes in other sovereign countries with which it is not officially in military conflict, and its perception of U.S. identity. Basing this study on approaches inspired by poststructuralism, emphasis was put on the language with which the U.S. presidency interpret and gave meaning to this activity, which inevitably is related to the manner in which this actor perceives the world and its own identity. By subsequently dividing the analysis in three cases that followed each other in a chronological order, it has been possible to track the historical development of the discourse on this issue.

In the first case, which covered the second Bush Administration from 2005 till 2009, it became apparent that discourse employed on the activity of drone strikes in Pakistan by the U.S. presidency portrayed the U.S. as one of the many legitimate sovereign political powers which together make up the global political system, who are confronted with a more fluid opponent. By doing this, the presidency stressed the importance of political sovereignty. However, a hierarchical division was made between the sovereignty of diverging states, based on the fact of whether they adhere to democratic values or not. In this way, a justification for interference in other states presented itself by referring to their lack of democracy and freedom. This could be done in light of the fact that democracy was believed to bring peace, so a country characterized by conflict and bearing extremists could be portrayed as not democratic and free enough.

In this perspective, we can still detect some of the basic characteristics of Modernization Theory. Specifically the belief in the transformative potential of democracy is a telling example in this regard. However, it does not become clear how the strategy employed by the U.S. could serve this purpose. In this regard, it is arguably not surprising that the activity of drone strikes in Pakistan itself was silenced during this time period, indicating that the U.S. presidency did not know well how to incorporate this novel ethical aspect of identity within a particular spatial and temporal framework of U.S. identity.

In the second case, which covered part of the first Obama Administration from 2009 till 2011, discourse dealt more directly with the activity of drone strikes in Pakistan. In it, the U.S. is portrayed as an actor adhering to the basic legal values which make up the core of its

identity. This is done by arguing that the activity of targeted drone strikes does is no way represent a new kind of activity, but rather merely has to be executed in accordance with conventional legal standards and the laws of war. However, the fact that the U.S. presidency was still actively silencing the activity during this time period as well, indicates that a tension between the activity and the portrayal of U.S. identity persisted.

It is in that sense remarkable that the U.S. presidency did not deal extensively with the question of whether or not it could legally interfere in a military fashion in the affairs of states it was not in conflict with. By merely referring to the ethical argument that the drone strikes represented a legal instance of self-defense, it ignored the fact that the U.S. was not in an official conflict with the country one whose soil it executed these actions. The presidency admittedly argued that it should convince the Pakistani people that the drone strikes were in their advantage as well, but why it was the case that drone strikes could deal with the core of the issue was not covered. In this way, the presidency moved away from former arguments on the legitimacy of acting in an unilateral fashion based on arguments related to democracy and freedom. Now, it tried to convey the image of the U.S. as a legal actor with the ability to act globally, in the advantage of all, without however referring to the spatial and temporal justifications for this. Consequently, the convincing nature and stability of this discourse was questionable.

In the third case, which covered the last part of the first and the total second Obama Administration, we have again detected a considerable shift in discourse. Now, the presidency portrayed the world as complex in its nature, with evil being present as a precondition of human life. Consequently, the U.S., as the most powerful state in the world, was portrayed as having the position of a wise global leader. What the actions of this wise leader should subsequently adhere to were the standards of proportional and legal behavior. Only in this way could the U.S. deal with evil in the world. As such, the presidency portrayed its drone strikes in light of the burden of power; as a regretful but necessary course of action to combat the evil forces in the world. The fact that this takes place in other sovereign states was moreover viewed to be no sensitive issue, since other states are either unable or unwilling to combat the evil that exists within their territory.

On a general level, what we can therefore conclude from the described development through the three cases, is the fact in all cases the presidency was on a basic level confronted with justifying a type of action which is directed at a confrontation with an unconventional type of enemy which does not adhere to traditional political boundaries. In all cases, we could therefore see the presidency struggling with interpreting an framing this unconventional

situation and the action taken to deal with this situation, for it relies on the conventional inherited discourses as well. As such, we saw the first Bush Administration still relying strongly on the belief in democracy and freedom, themes related to the traditional Modernization Theory, but also themes which did not comply well with the new situation and course of action. Subsequently, the first Obama Administration initially dropped these themes to frame the reality of the international political situation, and rather emphasized the legality of its actions, without however adequately interpreting the novel nature of the international political reality. Only from 2011 on did the Obama Administrations add this aspect to their discourse as well, by stressing that its legal aspect was part of the necessary and burdensome wise leadership in an international political realm where evil inevitably existed, and unilateral action by means of targeted drone strikes was therefore a necessary means to combat these evil forces.

What these results tell us is the fact that U.S. identity and the types of actions in the international political realm associated with it have considerably changed in the last two decades. It therefore appears that our initial suspicion that the activity of targeted drone strikes outside of military conflict zones indicated a shift in U.S. identity was justified. As such, the results of this study might serve well to inform other scholars on the recent developing nature of U.S. identity and political action. Moreover, they serve as an indication for the potential changing roles of identity or the Rule of Law in a world that becomes ever more integrated. In this way, these results can function as an inspiration for further research related to these topics of international politics. What these results nevertheless do not indicate, is the fact one or the other of these two has caused the development of the other, as indicated in our section on the limitations of the research. For that reason, this study might also be taken as a starting point for further research on the causal relations that play a role in the treated issue. Also, it might serve as an inspiration to conduct further research on the same topic of the relation between action and identity, for example by means of different methods to approach the issue with. Whatever such courses others might take, the results of this study have nevertheless demonstrated to be able to stand firmly on their own as well.

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