

Examining Americans' Attitudes toward Drone Strikes on the Eve of the 2012 Presidential Election

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On the eve of the 2012 U.S. Presidential election, we conducted an initial investigation into the determinants of people's attitudes toward the U.S. military's use of drone strikes in Pakistan. Drawing on existing research and theory in social and political psychology, we examined the effects of political ideology, framing effects (national security vs. human costs), value orientations, and the salience of Presidential candidate endorsement (Obama vs. Romney) on attitudes toward drone policy. The perceived relevance of security values and universalism values to judgments of drone policy mediated the relationship between ideology and drone policy attitudes. Additionally, a human costs frame increased the relevance of universalism values and decreased the relevance of security values to drone policy attitudes relative to a national security frame, and, through these values, decreased support for drone strikes. Neither of these effects was moderated by candidate salience. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings, and identify several avenues for future research on this important and controversial policy.

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During the 2012 U.S. Presidential campaign, there were few issues on which Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, and a majority of the U.S. public agreed. One exception was the targeted assassination of suspected militants by unmanned aerial vehicles, or “drone strikes.” Under the Bush administration in 2001, the Central Intelligence Agency began targeting alleged members of al-Qaeda with remote control-operated drones (Gorman, Entous, & Barnes, 2013). Since then, the Obama administration has substantially increased drone strikes, maintaining that they are “a targeted, focused effort at people who are on a list of active terrorists trying to go in and harm Americans” (Amnesty International, 2012). Obama’s policy gained not only the praise of Republican candidate Mitt Romney during the third presidential debate (Politico Staff, 2012), but also the support of 62% of Americans surveyed prior to the election (Pew Research Center, 2012).

People outside the United States, however, disapproved of drone strikes more than any other U.S. policy, criticizing in particular the Obama administration’s increase in “signature strikes,” which are aimed at vehicles, camps, or buildings rather than at specific individuals (Parsons & Memoli, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2012). Furthermore, the United Nations’ High Commissioner on Human Rights has called for an investigation into human rights violations resulting from the U.S.’s drone warfare policy, including the deaths of innocent civilians (Agence-France Presse, 2012). Some estimates suggest that in Pakistan, 23% of those killed by U.S. drones have been harmless noncombatants (New America Foundation, 2013). It is difficult, however, to come across definitive statistics, considering that the program is defined as “covert action” under U.S. law.

Drone strikes are a pressing national security and foreign policy issue. It is therefore important to understand the factors that determine Americans’ attitudes toward drone warfare. To date, however, attitudes toward drone strikes have received little empirical attention. The purpose of this article is to provide an initial investigation into why Americans support or oppose drone strikes, in the context of the 2012 U.S. Presidential election. We examine four factors that the social and political psychology literatures have indicated are important determinants of public policy support: ideology, personal values, framing effects, and candidate endorsement. This study should provide a foundation for future research on Americans’ attitudes toward drone warfare.

Political Ideology and Personal Values

People who hold right-wing attitudes and beliefs support war and militarism more strongly, both generally and in specific conflicts (e.g., Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, & Kielmann, 2005; Doty, Winter, Peterson, & Kimmelmeier, 1997). Thus, conservatives should more strongly support the U.S. military’s drone warfare policy and liberals should more strongly oppose it. Moreover, distinct values may explain ideological differences in support for drone strikes. Personal values are

theorized to form the bases of political belief systems (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1994). According to Schwartz's (1992) theory of basic human values, there are ten universal value orientations, two of which we expected to be directly relevant to drone policy attitudes: security values, which express the goal of maintaining the safety, harmony and stability of society, and universalism values, which express the goal of protecting the welfare of all people (Schwartz, 1992).

A host of studies have found positive correlations between conservatism and security values, on the one hand, and liberalism and universalism values, on the other (Braithwaite, 1998; Cohrs, Maes, Moschner, & Kielman, 2007; Morgan, Mullen, & Skitka, 2010). Other evidence indicates that security values are positively associated with support for war, whereas universalism values are negatively associated with support for war (Cohrs et al., 2005). Together, these findings suggest that conservatives should support drone warfare because of its relevance to security values, whereas liberals should oppose drone warfare because of its relevance to universalism values.

Framing Effects and Personal Values

Conservatism alone, however, cannot account for the widespread support for drone strikes in the United States; while polling shows a majority of Americans support drone strikes (Pew Research Center, 2012), only one-third of Americans identify as conservative (American National Election Studies, 2008). Anecdotal evidence suggests that politicians and the media play a role in shaping Americans' attitudes toward drone strikes, across party lines. For example, Margaret Sullivan (2012), public editor of the *New York Times*, cites critics who attribute public support for drone strikes to uncritical reporting. Those critics argue that the media have neither challenged the Obama administration's portrayal of the policy as necessary to combat enemy fighters, nor adequately emphasized the policy's human costs.

This argument is consistent with research on message framing. There is ample evidence that individual attitudes on a political issue can be shifted by making some values and concerns more relevant to that issue than others (see Chong & Druckman, 2007 for a review). Thus, people would be more likely to evaluate drone strikes in terms of security values—and subsequently support the policy—if they see the issue in terms of the Obama administration's "national security" frame. In contrast, people would be more likely to evaluate drone strikes in terms of universalism values—and subsequently oppose the policy—if they see the issue in terms of a "human costs" frame. These frames are echoed in the arguments for and against drone strikes: supporters argue that drone warfare is a necessary and efficient means of ensuring U.S. national security (e.g., Curtis, 2011), whereas critics have called on the United States to clarify, revise or dismantle its drone

warfare policy because of the resulting civilian casualties (e.g., Human Rights Watch, 2011).

Salience of Political Candidate Endorsement

We see at least three possibilities for how the salience of presidential candidate endorsement of drone strikes could influence Americans' attitudes toward the policy. First, public opinion tends to favor issues that both Democrats and Republicans support (Zaller, 1992). Thus, Americans may generally favor drone strikes (Pew Research Center, 2012) because the policy has been supported by both Democratic administrations (i.e., Obama) and Republican administrations and candidates (i.e., George W. Bush and Mitt Romney). If this is the case, then people may support drone strikes regardless of whether Obama's or Romney's endorsement of the policy is made salient.

Second, some in the media have suggested that partisan loyalties drive drone policy attitudes (Rohde, 2012). Social psychological research offers potential support for this claim—people perceive a policy as liberal when endorsed by a Democrat, but they see the same policy as conservative when endorsed by a Republican (Cohen, 2003). Thus, liberals might oppose drone strikes when endorsed by Mitt Romney, but support them when endorsed by President Obama (and vice versa among conservatives). Third, a policy may receive more public support when a politician endorses it against his or her own party platform. This is the so-called “only Nixon could go to China” effect (Sunstein, 2012), which captures the presumption that Republican President Richard Nixon may have received more public support for his engagement with communist China than a Democrat who endorsed the same policy would have received. Thus, in our study, people may more strongly favor the “conservative” drone strikes policy when endorsed by a liberal (i.e., Obama) than by a conservative candidate (i.e., Romney). We explored all of these ideas by manipulating the salience of which candidate (Obama or Romney) endorsed drone warfare.

Summary and Overview of Hypotheses

Building on the literature reviewed earlier, we examined the determinants of Americans' attitudes toward the U.S. military's drone warfare policy in the context of the 2012 U.S. Presidential election. First, we predicted that conservatives would more strongly support drone strikes than would liberals; further, conservatives' support would be explained by their greater likelihood of evaluating drone strikes in terms of security values, whereas liberals' opposition would be explained by their greater likelihood of evaluating drone strikes in terms of universalism values. Second, we predicted that Americans would be less supportive of drone strikes if framed in terms of human costs than national security; further, Americans'

lower support for drone strikes when framed in terms of human costs would be explained by the increased relevance of universalism values to their policy judgments, whereas greater support for drone strikes when framed in terms of national security would be explained by the increased relevance of security values to their policy judgments. Finally, we examined three alternative hypotheses regarding how and whether people's support for drone warfare would depend on which Presidential candidate's endorsement of drone strikes was salient.

Method

Participants

Three weeks before the 2012 U.S. Presidential election, we recruited 234 current U.S. residents to complete an online survey titled, "American's Political Attitudes."¹ Participants completed this survey through Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online labor market where researchers can recruit diverse samples of participants (e.g., Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Well-established findings in social psychology and political science have been replicated in MTurk samples (e.g., Horton, Rand, & Zeckhauser, 2011). Interested individuals selected a link to the online survey and were compensated 50 cents.

We embedded two attention checks in the study materials to reduce error variance and increase statistical power (Oppenheimer, Mayvis, & Davidenko, 2009). After reading the drone policy statement (see below), participants were asked on a separate page to correctly identify the target candidate (Obama or Romney). Twenty-eight individuals mistakenly identified the target and were removed from the analysis. Eighteen other participants failed an additional attention check embedded in the questionnaire ("For quality control purposes, please select 'Strongly Disagree' for this question") and were removed, leaving 188 participants in the final analysis (39% female; 75% White; $M_{\text{age}} = 32$ years). This 20% attention check failure rate is consistent with the rates observed in typical MTurk samples (e.g., Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2012; Oppenheimer et al., 2009).

Materials and Procedure

Manipulations and dependent measure. Participants encountered the drone warfare policy statement in a 2 (Candidate salience: Romney, Obama) \times 2 (Frame:

¹ Although MTurk samples are typically disproportionately female (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010), our sample was disproportionately male. While this may be explained simply by sampling variation, the title of the survey may have been more attractive to male participants, who have historically been more interested in politics than women (Bennett & Bennett, 1989).

National Security, Human Costs) between-subjects research design.² Thus, the use of unmanned aerial drones in Pakistan by the U.S. military was described as either causing civilian casualties or as necessary for national security, and the policy was described as being endorsed by either Mitt Romney or President Obama. Statement texts are included in online supplemental materials. After reading the statement, support for the drone policy was measured with the following three items assessed on six-point scales (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 6 = *Strongly Agree*): “Using drones in Pakistan is good military policy”; “I agree with people who support using drones in Pakistan”; and “I do not support the military’s use of drones in Pakistan” (reverse scored), which were averaged to form the drone policy support measure ($\alpha = .96$).

Security and universalism values. On a separate page following the drone policy statement, participants indicated the extent to which certain values guided their judgment of the drone policy (1 = *To no extent*, 5 = *To a great extent*). We included one item from the security scale (i.e., national security [protection of my country from enemies]) and one item from the universalism scale (i.e., social justice [correcting injustice, caring for the weak]) of Schwartz’s (1992) basic human values scale that we determined to be most relevant to conservatives’ and liberals’ attitudes toward drone policy, respectively.³

Political identification variables and demographic information. After completing the values items, participants provided feeling thermometer ratings (0–100) of Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, Democrats, Republicans, Liberals, and Conservatives. On a separate page, participants then completed the target candidate identification attention check mentioned above. Following the attention check, participants indicated whether liberals or conservatives support or oppose eight policies (e.g., same-sex marriage, affirmative action programs). Correct and incorrect answers were coded as 1 and 0 respectively, and correct scores were summed

² There were 47 participants in the Obama National Security condition, 47 participants in the Obama Human Costs condition, 42 participants in the Romney National Security condition, and 52 participants in the Romney Human Costs condition.

³ We also included two other security (i.e., family security and social order) and universalism (i.e., a world at peace, and equality) values in the questionnaire. However, responses to the three-item security ($\alpha = .44$) and universalism ($\alpha = .66$) scales had low reliability. Therefore, we included the two values that appeared most directly related to the national security and human costs frames in our primary analyses. The results displayed in Figures 1 and 2 are identical to those with the full but unreliable security and universalism scales, with the exception that the path from frame to security values is non-significant in the analysis including the three-item security values scale. We also conducted analyses with the other individual values. Whereas ideology significantly predicted the “equality” and “family security” values, it did not significantly predict the “a world at peace” and “social order” values (although the effects were in the expected direction). The frame did not significantly predict any of the four remaining value items. Although the framing effects were in the expected direction on the “a world at peace” and “equality” items, they were in the opposite direction for the “family security” and “social order” items.

to form a political knowledge measure (scores ranged from 1 to 8; 89% of participants answered at least 6 of 8 questions correctly). Participants then reported their political ideology (1 = *Extremely Liberal*; 7 = *Extremely Conservative*), which served as an independent variable, and party affiliation (1 = *Strong Democrat*; 7 = *Strong Republican*). Lastly, participants provided demographic information such as age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Results

Analysis Plan

After reporting descriptive statistics and intercorrelations, we proceed to test our hypotheses regarding the effects of political ideology, personal values, framing, and candidate support salience on drone strikes support. To test our hypotheses that personal values mediate the effects of political ideology and frame on drone strikes support, we used Preacher and Hayes' (2008) INDIRECT macro for SPSS. In two separate analyses, we specified ideology (or frame) as the independent variable, security and universalism values as mediators, and drone policy support as the dependent variable, with frame (or ideology) and candidate salience (0 = Romney, 1 = Obama) as covariates. To test the effects of candidate salience on drone policy support, we conducted a moderated multiple regression analysis as per Aiken and West (1991), with ideology (mean-centered), frame (0 = national security; 1 = human cost), and candidate salience entered in Step 1, all two-way interactions between the variables entered in Step 2, and the three-way interaction between the variables entered in Step 3.

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

As expected, ideology ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.52$) was positively correlated with drone policy support ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.45$), $r(185) = .29$, $p < .001$, and the relevance of security values ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.08$), $r(185) = .25$, $p < .001$, and negatively correlated with the relevance of universalism values ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.34$), $r(184) = -.16$, $p < .05$. Also as expected, drone policy support was positively correlated with the relevance of security, $r(186) = .47$, $p < .001$, and negatively correlated with the relevance of universalism, $r(185) = -.40$, $p < .01$. The relevance of security and universalism values to drone strikes were negatively correlated with each other, $r(185) = -.19$, $p < .01$.

The mean for the 7-point ideology item indicated that the sample was more left-leaning than right-leaning, $t(186) = -8.42$, $p < .001$, $d = .62$. The mean for the 6-point drone support measure indicated that the sample was ambivalent regarding drone warfare, $t(187) = .23$, *ns*. The mean on the drone policy support measure among liberals (those with a value < 4 on the 7-point ideology item) was

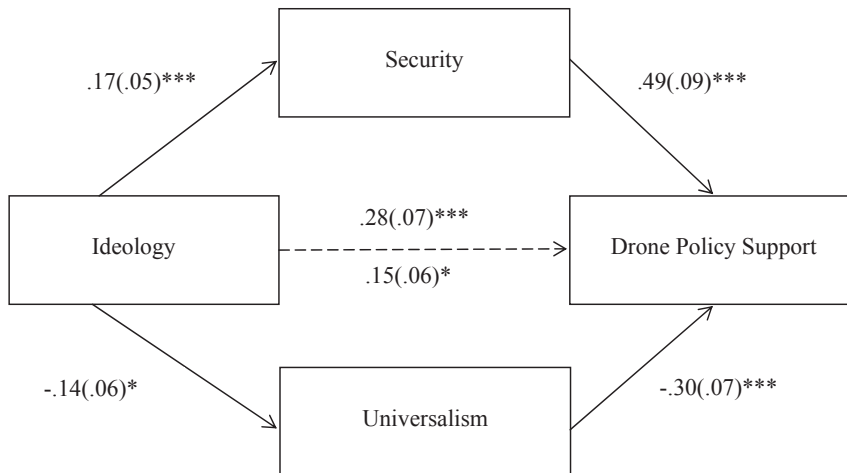


Fig. 1. Mediation of the relationship between ideology and drone policy support through security and universalism values

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

Notes:

Values represent unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. Frame and candidate salience were included as covariates in the model. The unstandardized regression coefficient above the dotted line represents the direct effect of ideology on drone policy support; the coefficient below the line represents the effect of ideology while partialling the effects of security and universalism values. Adjusted $R^2 = .35$. Tests are reported with 95% confidence intervals with 5,000 bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap samples for the indirect effects. For security values ($b = .09$, $SE = .03$), lower = .04, upper = .14. For universalism values ($b = .04$, $SE = .02$), lower = .01, upper = .09. A contrast between indirect effects was not significant, lower = $-.11$, upper = .02.

below the midpoint of that scale, but not significantly so, $t(120) = -1.30$, $p = .195$. Conservatives (those > 4 on the ideology item) clearly supported the policy ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.47$), $t(35) = 4.11$, $p < .001$, $d = .69$.

Hypotheses Tests

Political ideology and personal values. Figure 1 shows that security and universalism values fully mediated the relationship between ideology and drone policy support, in support of the first hypothesis. Ideology positively predicted the relevance of security in evaluating support for drone strikes, which positively predicted drone policy support. In contrast, ideology negatively predicted the relevance of universalism in evaluating support for drone strikes, which negatively predicted drone policy support. Both indirect effects were significant (see Figure 1 note). The effect of ideology on drone policy support was reduced by including the indirect effects via the relevance of security and universalism values in the model.

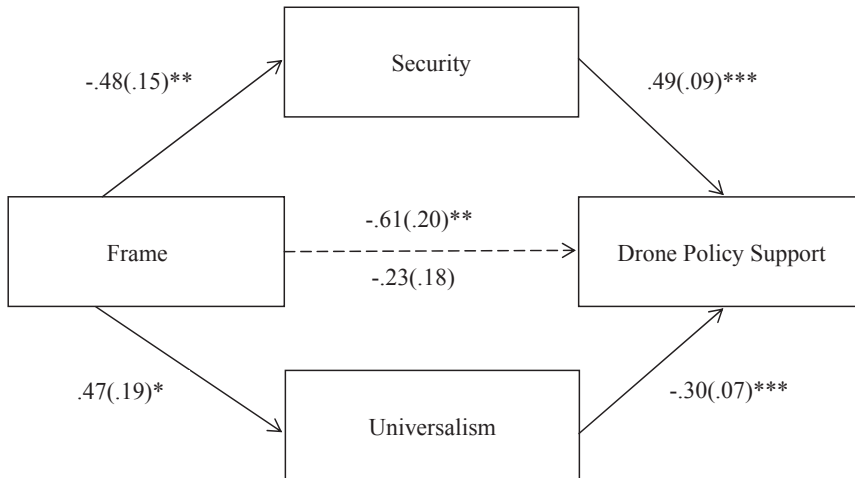


Fig. 2. Mediation of the effects of message frame on drone policy support through security and universalism values

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Notes:

Values represent unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. For Frame, 0 = National Security, 1 = Human Cost. Ideology and candidate salience were included as covariates in the model. The unstandardized regression coefficient above the dotted line represents the direct effect of Frame on drone policy support; the coefficient below the line represents the nonsignificant effect of Frame while partialling the effects of security and universalism values. Adjusted $R^2 = .35$. Tests are reported with 95% confidence intervals with 5,000 bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap samples for the indirect effects. For security values ($b = -.24$, $SE = .09$), lower = $-.45$, upper = $-.09$. For universalism values ($b = -.14$, $SE = .07$), lower = $-.31$, upper = $-.03$. A contrast between indirect effects was not significant, lower = $-.13$, upper = $.34$.

Framing effects and personal values. Figure 2 shows that compared to the national security frame, the human costs frame increased the relevance of universalism values to judgments of drone warfare policy and decreased the relevance of security values, in support of the second hypothesis. Frame negatively predicted the relevance of security values in evaluating support for drone strikes, which positively predicted drone policy support. In contrast, frame positively predicted the relevance of universalism in evaluating support for drone strikes, which negatively predicted drone policy support. Both indirect effects were significant (see Figure 2 note). The effect of frame on drone policy support was reduced to nonsignificance by including the indirect effects via the relevance of universalism and security values in the model.⁴

⁴ The frame and candidate salience manipulations did not have any significant main or interactive effects on the variables following the manipulations (i.e., ideology, party, feeling thermometer ratings), all $ps > .073$. We also examined whether there were interactive effects of ideology and frame on security

Salience of political candidate endorsement. In addition to the ideology and framing main effects, the moderated multiple regression analysis revealed a candidate salience main effect such that people more strongly supported drone warfare when it was endorsed by Obama than by Romney, $b = .44$, $SE = .20$, $p < .05^5$ (model adjusted $R^2 = .13$). None of the two-way ($ps > .313$) or three-way ($p = .181$) interactions was significant.⁶ Thus, while drone strikes support was higher when endorsed by Obama than by Romney, the salience of the candidate's endorsement did not moderate the effects of ideology or frame on drone strikes support.

Discussion

The U.S. military's use of drone strikes in Pakistan is a controversial counterterrorism policy that the Obama administration has expanded since 2009 and that Mitt Romney promised to continue if elected. There is broad support for the policy among the U.S. public, even as international opinion leans heavily against it. Guided by social and political psychology theory and research, we conducted an initial investigation into the factors that influenced Americans' attitudes regarding this important public policy issue as they prepared to elect their next President.

We tested the effects of political ideology, personal values, message frames, and candidate endorsement salience on people's drone policy attitudes. First, conservatives were more likely than liberals to evaluate drone strikes in terms of security values, which was associated with stronger support for drone warfare. Liberals, in contrast, were more likely than conservatives to evaluate drone strikes in terms of universalism values, which was associated with weaker support for drone warfare. These findings are consistent with extant research on the relationship between personal values, ideology, and attitudes more broadly (Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz, Caprara, & Vecchione, 2010), and research on the effects of security and universalism values on attitudes toward war more specifically (Cohrs et al., 2005).

Second, framing drone strikes in terms of human costs—as opposed to national security—reduced Americans' support for them because a human costs

or universalism values, and whether these values had interactive effects with the frame on drone support. These analyses yielded no significant interactive effects, $ps > .230$, indicating that none of the a or b paths of the mediation model was moderated.

⁵ We used INDIRECT to examine whether security or universalism values explained this effect, but candidate salience condition was not related to either value, $ps > .429$.

⁶ An anonymous reviewer recommended that we examine whether frame or candidate salience effects were moderated by political party instead of ideology. Thus, we reproduced the moderated multiple regression analysis described in the text, replacing ideology with party. Main effects of party, candidate salience, and frame ($ps < .05$) were not qualified by any significant two-way interactions ($ps > .224$). There was however a significant three-way interaction ($\beta = -.28$, $p < .05$). Unpacking this interaction suggested that Democrats mostly supported drone strikes unless framed in terms of human costs and with Romney support. Among Republicans, they most strongly supported drone strikes when framed in terms of national security and with Obama support.

frame increased the relevance of universalism values, while also decreasing the relevance of security values, to drone policy attitudes. This finding extends prior framing effects research (e.g., Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997) by demonstrating that opposing frames can elicit countervailing values that ultimately influence policy attitudes.

These results have important practical implications, too; they show that one way to attenuate the relatively strong domestic support for drone strikes is to offer a human costs frame to counteract the prevailing national security frame promoted by the media and politicians in both political parties. Indeed, whereas a majority of participants (64%) supported the policy in the national security condition (approximating the 62% support observed by Pew Research Center, 2012), in the human costs condition, a majority of participants (56%) *opposed* drone warfare. In this respect, media critics may be correct in suggesting that a majority of Americans support drone strikes only because they have not been apprised of the deadly and destructive consequences for innocent civilians (Sullivan, 2012).

Finally, support for drone strikes was higher when Obama endorsed it compared to Romney, a result that is most in line with the idea that people are more persuaded when a politician takes a position inconsistent with their party's platform (i.e., a liberal President endorsing a "conservative" national security policy). In this liberal-leaning sample, there was no indication that people's partisan loyalties biased their drone policy judgments; instead, political ideology and frames influenced drone policy support through the relevance of security and universalism values, regardless of which candidate's policy endorsement was salient. This lack of partisan biases may be unsurprising, given that both candidates actually endorsed drone warfare, and our sample of relatively knowledgeable participants were possibly aware of this reality.⁷ However, we suggest caution in interpreting this nonsignificant result, given the difficulty of detecting interactions even in moderately sized samples (McClelland & Judd, 1993).

Future Directions And Limitations

Ours is the first study in social or political psychology to examine people's drone policy attitudes. The results provide a foundation for future research on drone warfare for scholars from fields ranging from psychology to political science to communication. They also have practical implications for the media, policy makers, and social justice advocates. Whereas the salience of which presidential

⁷ In fact, our candidate statements may have subtly highlighted cross-party agreement on drone warfare policy: in the Obama condition, the statement reads that he "has continued" the Pentagon policy (implying he inherited it from Bush), and in the Romney condition it reads that he "plans to continue" the policy (implying it is the current Obama administration's policy; see online supplementary materials).

candidate endorsed drone strikes was a more relevant issue before the election than after it, factors such as ideological and framing effects and the relevance of personal values are important considerations for answering questions regarding drone warfare attitudes that linger today.

As an initial investigation into attitudes toward drone policy, our study raises many new questions. First, we focused on the military use of unmanned drones as part of foreign policy. Following the election, there has also been debate over the use of drones for intelligence (e.g., surveillance) purposes, both foreign *and* domestic. This context may present more complex ideological and value relationships to drone policy than a simple conservative-liberal distinction. For instance, examining the impact of ideology from a two-dimensional perspective (e.g., Duckitt, 2001; Feldman & Johnston, 2013) may demonstrate that whereas right-wing authoritarianism or social conservatism may more strongly predict support for domestic surveillance (e.g., to maintain obedience to authority and restrain deviants), social dominance orientation or economic conservatism (which is associated with libertarianism; Iyer, Koleva, Graham, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012) may not.

Our evidence clearly shows that highlighting the human costs of the military use of drones decreases support for this foreign policy (relative to a national security frame) because it increases the relevance of universalism values. Researchers should work to understand the factors that improve the efficacy of the human costs frame (or conversely, what makes the national security frame so persuasive), including but not limited to: the number of human casualties (low vs. high); the presumed innocence of victims (e.g., women and children vs. presumed terrorists); the location of strikes (e.g., densely vs. sparsely populated areas); the physical distance from victims (e.g., Pakistani vs. American soil); similarity with victims (e.g., superordinate category inclusion); additional consequences of drone strikes (e.g., suffering of America's international reputation, Taliban retaliation, opposition of our allies); and even the targets' citizenship status (e.g., foreign nationals vs. U.S. citizens, such as Anwar al-Awlaki). It is also possible that our message frames interact, so that the salience of national security may make human costs more acceptable even when one is aware of them, at least for people who are not driven by strong moral convictions surrounding human costs. Future research should explore this possibility.

One of the limitations of the present study is that we relied on single-item measures of our mediating variables (e.g., the relevance of security and universalism values). Single-item measures can be less reliable than multi-item scales. Thus, we may have underestimated the size of the indirect effects of ideology and frame, via the relevance of universalism and security values respectively, on support for drone strikes (Hoyle & Kenny, 1999). In the future, researchers should take care to invest in reliable, multi-item measures of the relevance of values.

Conclusion

During the U.S. Presidential election, Americans primarily understood the use of unmanned drones as a military and foreign policy issue. There was also a great deal of support for this policy, and our findings suggest that consistent with arguments by some in the media (Sullivan, 2012), this support was due to the public's understanding of drone policy primarily through the prism of a national security frame. In the wake of the election, public, media, and policy-maker attention to drone strikes has both increased and expanded. This is in part due to the nomination and eventual confirmation of John Brennan, considered the author of the Obama administration's drone warfare policies, as Director of the CIA, and Senator Rand Paul's (R-KY) subsequent thirteen-hour filibuster on the Senate floor. Our study provides several explanations for Americans' drone policy attitudes, grounded in social-psychological theory and research. It should also provide a foundation and road map for future researchers to understand the complexity of this important and controversial policy.

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Supplementary Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

National Security
Human Costs

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