The "China Threat" Meets the "Drone Revolution":

Chinese UAVs as a Crucial Case

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ABSTRACT: The People's Republic of China (PRC) and its ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) present the world with an avowedly peaceful rising power which vehemently denies any hegemonic ambition. All shades of realism, and Power Transition Theory in particular, are beyond skeptical of these claims, predicting instead that as a state's power approaches that of the hegemon its expanding interests make conflict inevitable, even despite the peaceful preferences of both the rising and declining powers. This study assesses these competing positions through the lens of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its use (and non-use) of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Relying on the assumption that all sides recognize the prohibitive costs of hegemonic war, a "crucial case" framework is employed to test a synergistic narrative of a "China Threat" enabled to use force in *measures short of war* by a "Drone Revolution." It concludes that although the anti-liberal PRC possesses combat drone capacities comparable to the global leader, the U.S., and faces similar security threats from "terrorists" both foreign and domestic, the regime refrains from emulating the U.S. power-projection tactic of drone strikes. China's restraint stems from surprising respect for international law, a sense of solidarity with developing countries whose sovereignty is violated by drones, a desire to maintain its founding principle of non-interference, and a preference to assume the moral high ground while assailing the legitimacy of "the unipole." High-minded objectives such as these are nonetheless compromised by the PRC's expanding role in armed drone proliferation.

Is China a threat to the current world order? What indicators and which arenas should scholars focus on to analyze this issue, one of the most vital of the 21ˢᵗ century? The People's Republic of China (PRC) has experienced tremendous economic growth over the past four decades, and scholars worldwide are applying various theories to predict "what kind" of rising power it will be. According to Power Transition Theory, a "dissatisfied" PRC is likely to channel its discontent into "revisionist" attempts to challenge and ultimately replace the declining American hegemon. But if both sides, indeed virtually all

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states, recognize the costs of hegemonic war, other measures "short of war" might be observed as evidence that such attempts are afoot.

A relevant but so far unrelated literature on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs or drones hereafter)[1] has shown concern for how an anti-liberal power[2] might utilize the technology, which is theorized to lower the costs of using force and enable new counter-terrorism tactics. If great power competition invariably includes arms races, the unrestricted ease of deploying armed drones outside of declared war zones might lead us to expect a much warmer bipolarity between the U.S. and China than the nuclear race of the Cold War.

This paper frames the PRC as a "crucial case" for these positions, concluding that revolutionary narratives for Chinese use of drones are premature and unlikely. The first two sections review the literature on "rising China" and UAVs in IR. These are followed by a methodological section synthesizing previously disconnected narratives of a "China Threat" and a "Drone Revolution," adding up to a *most likely* case for aggressive, even reckless international use of armed drones. The empirical sections draw on Chinese-language popular media accounts and official statements regarding PRC drone development and deployment to build a case similar to A. Iain Johnston's, showing that Chinese "assertiveness" has been greatly overstated. Two incidences of Chinese drone use and non-use are offered as evidence: deployment in the Sept. 2013 stand-off in the Senkaku-Diaoyu Islands and the widely publicized consideration of using a drone strike against a Burmese drug lord in early 2012. Additionally, China's stated positions against U.S. drone strikes, even while facing comparable security threats from terrorism, are offered as further indications of principled restraint. The paper closes with a consideration of the PRC's role in armed-drone proliferation, arguing that unrestricted sales undermine the PRC's criticism of the U.S. based on "responsible" use of UAVs. While much of the scholarship on drones focuses on building capacity, the

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[1] See Clarke for detailed definitions and the "nuts & bolts" of the technology.
[2] To say the PRC is illiberal or non-liberal, as if its national institutions merely lacked liberal values, would be to overlook the fact that the PRC has described its trajectory as "socialism with Chinese characteristics," standing in explicit opposition to the wholesale adoption of liberal values and institutions. Thus, the regime is described as anti-liberal throughout this paper.

present study fills a gap in our knowledge about the circumstances when countries other than the U.S. do or do not use and sell them.

Rising China & Power Transition. The story of China's ascent to today's status as a great power is well known, but it is worth enumerating specific implications for theoretical approaches to international relations. These vary by whether the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) may choose its strategy, including especially its officially peaceful one, or whether structural factors and rising power itself will inevitably lead to international conflict. This section sketches an argument that rising China possesses motives and means to threaten the U.S., America's liberal and Asian allies, and the liberal world order as a whole.[3] Whether explained via offensive, structural, or classical realism or the subset of Power Transition Theory (PTT) and its ilk,[4] scholarship of the past decade increasingly predicts that China's rise will be consequential for American primacy and the entire international system.

As with most studies concerning the PRC, regime transparency beyond officially published "White Papers" is insufficient to verify even basic facts, and it is only natural, indeed the very purpose of political science, to rely on theory to fill gaps in our knowledge. We know that a significant portion of China's economic growth is being channeled into increasing power projection ability, but so far there is little concrete indication of its medium-to-long-run intent.[5] The U.S. Dept. of Defense publishes a yearly report on the People's Liberation Army (PLA), reporting annual increases in military expenditures of 9.5% from 2005 to 2014, approximating and recently exceeding overall GDP growth rates. These are only official figures, thought by U.S. hawks to be deliberately deflated. The Information Office of the State Council of

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[3] Policy implications of this threat point the U.S. toward containment or encouraging other countries to "bandwagon" with it against China. Mearshimer, pg. 402, believes the U.S. policy of engagement, framed as containment's antithesis, is misguided. He favors instead action to slow economic growth "considerably" in the PRC. Friedberg, 2015, offers containment as the most confrontational policy choice of six the U.S. might enact regarding China. U.S. policy is not the focus here, but possible responses should still be kept in mind.

[4] PTT will be discussed below, but other related and relevant sub-theories include "Leadership Long Cycle Theory" based on military dominance and "Relative Power Cycle Theory" whose focus is on actions chosen by states at "inflection points" between rising and declining powers. Thies' article helpfully summarizes these change-focused theories in his introduction.

[5] In addition to traditional difficulties of differentiating between offensive and defensive weaponry (Jervis), the very concept of defense may be shifting towards pre-emption and prevention, according to Fisk & Ramos. For a fascinating summary of China's growing debates on how to "protect foreign interests," see Duchatel et al.

the PRC carefully words its National Defense White Papers to avoid causing alarm with anything remotely

expansive beyond national borders, but these obtusely official revelations can hardly soothe as much as they

raise concern. Notably, the PLA's acknowledged and ongoing modernization process includes upgrading

high-tech weaponry, including "informationalization" of operations, thought to be a euphemism for greater

incorporation of UAVs for intelligence and, potentially, combat. How have these basic facts been

interpreted by IR scholars?

Scholarly narratives of the PRC's rise either adopt a "China threat" focus based on realist, power

transition theory, or favor the more liberal prediction that China will become a "responsible player" in the

current, U.S.-led international system.[6] Theoretical differences underlie opposing assumptions about the

PRC's orientation toward the prevailing liberal order, whether China can change to fit in or whether China

will change it to fit itself. Constructivist accounts of China like William Callahan's on the reconstruction

of a Sino-centric "*tian xia* 天下" of "All Under Heaven" have more affinity with the "spoiler" scenario of

Schweller &Pu than as a "supporter," whose predictions align roughly with the realist and liberal views,

respectively.[7] When predicted to be a "spoiler," realist scholars ascribe the PRC with hegemonic ambition—

diametrically opposite official rhetoric[8] of "peaceful development"—and a concomitant revision of the system

from unipolar to bipolar. Institutionalists and constructivists, again, view potential changes under a

hegemonic China as extending far beyond polarity to a transformation of systemic foundations towards one

reflecting Chinese interests and cultural/normative preferences. Such a drastic change could hardly be

accomplished without a preponderance of power, and so the remainder of this section zeroes in on how the

various forms of realism support a "China Threat" argument.

Hypotheses based on realism are clearest and thereby most falsifiable with regard to the expanding

material interests of rising powers. Jonathan Kirshner's point that realism is a pluralist paradigm is well

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[6] See Friedberg, 2005.
[7] See Ikenberry's articles and former Australian PM Rudd (in Rosecrance & Miller) for the liberal imperative to mold China into a "supporter."
[8] See Zheng Bijian. As "peaceful rise" was still deemed too threatening, "peaceful development" was later adopted.

taken, but even his preferred "classical" form is "wary and pessimistic" about the consequences of China's

rise.[9] Indeed, even the most optimistic realist analyses expect that the "status quo" of U.S. primacy in the

world will have to make significant and painful accommodations of the PRC's stated "core interests."[10]

Christopher Layne's sometimes self-congratulatory article goes the farthest to show that America's "unipolar

moment" is over, and China's "risen" status is his key material indicator.[11] For structural realists, China's

rise represents the expected and overdue return to order based on a balance of power, with bipolarity

theoretically more stable than a mulitpolar or anomalous post-Cold War unipolar system. Mearshimer's

offensive realism removes the guesswork from China's intentions but also offers the most pessimistic

assessment and prescriptions for the future, namely that all states pursue regional hegemony so as to

maximize their security.[12] The ship of containment may already have sailed as a viable policy option, but

some strands of realism predict U.S.-China conflict with global consequences despite whatever strategic

choices CCP and American leadership select.

By way of historical analogy, China and the current U.S. hegemon risk falling into "The

Thucydides Trap," in which "the inevitable unease that accompanies a sharp shift in the relative power of

potential competitors" may unintentionally escalate to disastrous great power war.[13] Either a "spark" by a

third party, as in the case of WWI's onset, or simply the militarization of an intractable conflict could

conceivably lead to this result. Moreover, the ensnaring aspect of the "trap" might appear despite each

party understanding the extremely high costs of war and claiming to favor anything but. Axiomatic

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[9] See Kirshner, pg. 65.

[10] Recent examples include White's proposal that the U.S. and PRC "share power" in Asia, Glaser's "Grand Bargain" of removing guarantees of defending Taiwan in exchange for maritime territorial concessions, and for Kirshner a general warning that the status quo is likely indefensible. Buzan's article helpfully lays out China's core interests. Taking into account "second image" concerns about the PRC's stability as an authoritarian developing country, leading perhaps to predictions of the CCP regime's collapse before it can mount a credible challenge to the U.S. fit more with liberalism or perhaps Kirshner's classical realism, which does consider domestic factors and "politics."

[11] Layne, pg. 207 and throughout the article, makes the case for irreversible U.S. decline as China's economy approaches the proportion of the U.S. globally.

[12] Though see Kirshner for a thoughtful critique of offensive realism which points out internal contradictions and makes it more of a utopian theory.

[13] Graham Allison's chapter, pg. 77, in Rosecrance & Miller (Eds.). Gilpin opens his 1989 article with a lengthy Thucydidean exposition.

expressions such as the Thucydides Trap and metaphors of crises "sparking a wildfire" find more testable

hypotheses in the theory of power transition.

Power Transition Theory (PTT), as a research agenda within realism, has its roots in the 1958

classic *World Politics* by A.F.K. Organski and is nicely summarized by DiCicco & Levy's article.[14] Robert

Gilpin also refined and formalized the concept of power transition as a theory, specified further to explain

hegemonic war.[15] In a nutshell, the outcome of China's rise for world order hinges on whether the PRC is

a "dissatisfied" or "revisionist" power rather than a "status quo power." If anything but the last, China can

be expected to challenge the liberal world order, perhaps ultimately "spoiling" and replacing it with a new

one, if Martin Jacques' provocative *When China Rules the World* is correct.[16] Stated thusly, the theory

provides context-independent support for what some outspoken area specialists and Chinese scholars

hypothesize or advocate.[17] PTT has been tested and critiqued numerous times[18] by scholars within and

outside the realist tradition, and it remains a well-known, useful, if not universally accepted lens to view

perennial rising powers such as Japan in the 1980s.

The economic challenges presented by the "rising sun" were perhaps comparable to the

contemporary situation, but the "rising dragon" piles on significance in military affairs and cultural values,

befitting discussions of true hegemony.[19] Whereas Japan earlier adopted Western imperialism before

accepting an imposed, liberal democracy, eminent Chinese intellectuals like Wang Gungwu and the "New

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[14] See also their chapter in Elman & Elman's edited volume. They note (pg. 110) that while power transition theory works within the power-focused realist paradigm, it rejects balance of power theory because "hegemonies frequently form, […] these extreme concentrations of power are stabilizing rather than destabilizing and contribute to peace rather than war, and […] blocking coalitions do not generally form against dominant states."

[15] See Gilpin 1981, 1988.

[16] Jacques, pg. 362, predicts that China will sponsor a new, Sino-centric international system "which will exist alongside the present system and probably slowly begin to usurp it."

[17] Critics of the "spoiler" scenario, such as Mark Beeson, first and foremost doubt that the PRC has sufficient power to remake world order, but they also question whether China could offer a coherent alternative. Zhao, 2015, offers the most accessible summary of traditional Chinese IR, and two proposals to upgrade the "morality" of the international system are offered by Zhao Tingyang (in Callahan & Barabantseva) and Yan Xuetong.

[18] See Harris, Lebow & Valentino.

[19] See Ian Clark for the differences between power transition and hegemonic succession. The latter, as Finnemore also notes with regard to legitimacy, requires a prescription of order based on widely, if not universally-held values.

Left's" Wang Hui are actively criticizing the "Westphalian" system of nation-states on a more fundamental level, with an emphasis on its dependence on "Western" values.[20] Shaun Breslin's survey of Chinese academic literature also finds a transition away from U.S.-led unipolarity to be both desirable and inevitable, in the Chinese view. PTT, in short, supports both realist and constructivist interpretations of China and "other rising powers" replacing the liberal order with norms derived from unique historical and cultural experience, as argued by Kupchan. The "China Threat" is therefore directed at both the U.S. and the post-WWII liberal order it helped create.

All of the preceding flies in the face of what Dingding Chen and Jianwei Wang describe as China's "grand strategy" since the Deng Xiaoping era. Condensed into a single phrase as 韬光养晦 *taoguang yanghui*, the strategy is variously translated as "keeping a low profile" or more ominously, "hiding our strength and biding our time."[21] The latter suggests that China will wait until it has gathered sufficient strength to avenge imperial misdeeds which have led to ongoing dissatisfaction, though Chen and Wang find this interpretation itself to be a Western imposition.[22] These authors and Suisheng Zhao note that many nationalist citizens and more outspoken leaders of the PLA are already calling for abandonment of Deng's principle in favor of a more muscular foreign policy.[23] The time has come, some argue, for China to "*liangjian* [reveal the sword]," firstly in the form of "pushing the U.S. out of Asia" both physically and in a policy declaration similar to America's "Monroe Doctrine."[24] In short, examples abound of Western and Chinese scholarship finding China to be "tired of an international order dominated by the West and its

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[20] Both Wangs and proponents of *tianxia* criticize the system of nation-states as causing violence, and viewing the legal equality of states in the current system as little more than a self-orientalized fiction in a teleological global historical narrative, they do not think the system would be mourned if it were replaced by a more hierarchical, Sinocentric one.

[21] Chen & Wang's consideration of the official "24-character" principle, pg. 196-199, helpfully shows how Deng's guiding statement can be translated to amplify or diminish the "China Threat."

[22] In terms of Georg Sørensen, the liberal world order led by the U.S. has chosen "imposition" on the rest of the world, including China, over "restraint," offering cause for an anti-liberal PRC to oppose the *means* by which the order is promoted, in addition to the values themselves.

[23] Zhao (2013), pg. 113.

[24] See Wang Dong, pg. 68, and his introduction for a Chinese "Monroe Doctrine." Notably, the author's purpose is to argue against these as mischaracterizations or fringe positions, but he does note that an internal debate exists.

ideas."[25] As China's capabilities rise, "[...] it wants to remake its home region in its own image."[26] For the

purposes of this study, it matters not whether a threat is "real" but rather that realist theory supports a

growing perception of China threatening U.S. interests, regional stability, and even the liberal world

order.[27] If motives and capacity to threaten are perceived and agreed to exist, the threat becomes a "social

fact."[28]

        This section has applied a theoretical argument for why increased state power is accompanied by

greater incentives to use force, including especially a desire to redress past grievances and reshape world

order in one's own favor. Power Transition Theory, as applied to the case of the "China Threat," yields the

prediction that the PRC will challenge U.S. interests first within its own region(s) and then globally,

ultimately affecting not only interests but the structure of the system itself. In this view, conflicts with the

current hegemon are inevitable and especially likely to escalate to militarization if the rising state is not

given expanded privileges in accord with its rising power and expanding interests. Johnston's 2013 article

in particular shows that popular media has supported the narrative of a PRC which is "newly assertive," and

events in the South China Sea since its publication may well reverse his palliative claims. The next section

considers one way in which the PRC may express an actually new assertiveness, by emulating, challenging,

and perhaps one day surpassing the global leader in UAV technology.

        Drone Strikes and UAVs in International Relations. Armed drones offer states a new, coercive

"measure short of war" to project power and advance interests beyond their borders.[29] The distinction of

being *short of* war, whose modern conduct is regulated by international law and historically by the Just War

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[25] Wolf, pg. 24. He cites several surveys suggesting that PRC citizens want China to gain respect and recognition but may not be content until regaining hegemonic status in the world.

[26] Thies, pg. 6. On pg. 7 he suggests that much of China's dissatisfaction can be traced to its status as a norm-taker which increasingly wants to be a norm-*maker*.

[27] Zhu and Lu helpfully point out exactly which nations' news media perceive a "China Threat": the U.S., Japan, India, Taiwan, and some European states like Germany. Others are generally "neutral, mixed, or positive."

[28] See Searle for a consideration of "social facts" based on human perception and agreement versus "brute facts" which are not.

[29] Diplomacy is another obvious measure short of war to achieve international objectives, and other, more coercive ones have long included economic sanctions and covert operations conducted by intelligence organizations and now especially subsections like the CIA's JSOC. While some associate any use of coercive force and violence with war, the standard definition in scholarship of "militarized interstate conflict" requires all parties legally "at war" to be states.

Tradition, is crucial because it currently allows any technologically capable state to use force against non-state actors, in an ambiguous moral and legal space between paradigms of war and law enforcement.[30] This section advances the argument that drones are a revolutionary instrument in state toolboxes which fundamentally challenges key concepts in IR theory and international law.[31] It focuses on drones being a most likely means to *use* force because they are *enabling*. Drones expand state playbooks of forceful tactics due to their low cost, reduction of risk to a state's soldiers, and various capability enhancements over previously existing tactics and technologies. The current lack of moral consensus about how drones should be used and regulated, in turn, enables states not just to possess drone power as capability, but also to employ drone strikes as a very real and attractive political tactic, to display power prestigiously in coercive action.[32] As a concern of Brunstetter and Braun, drones' liminal legal status puts states on a slippery slope edging the use of force away from a last resort towards being seen an expedient solution for an expanding array of issues and initiatives.

Scholars such as Enenmark posit that the advent of lethal drone strikes heralds a new era of "post-heroic" warfare, in which neither the physical strength of one's warriors (soldiers) nor humans at all will be decisive in battle. Conversely, skeptics like Stephanie Carvin show that "remote killing" is not at all new, opining that drones are little more than a "shiny" new distraction, but focusing only on the means of material destruction misses much of drones' significance. As John Williams convincingly argues, UAVs have all the advantages of previous weapons systems which allowed militaries to attack from greater and greater distances, but with the same intimacy as if meeting the enemy face-to-face.[33] Combining the

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[30] See Fisk & Ramos' forthcoming *Preventive Force: Targeted Killing and Technology*, Mirer (in Cohn, Ed.), McMahon (in Finkelstein et al.), Brunstetter & Jimenez-Bacardi, and Engle, pg. 174, for discussion of which legal lens through which to view drone strikes. Few other than the U.S. government and Etzioni argue that drone strikes are fully legal under existing laws.
[31] See Brooks for the conceptual challenges of "previously stable" understandings of sovereignty, self-defense, combatant, etc.
[32] Drones' small size and high technological status give states the option of using them covertly or in grand public displays, depending on the audience.
[33] On pg. 96, Williams notes, as this section should also, that "[w]hile this article focuses on armed drones, […] the development of drones, and the overwhelming majority of contemporary drone deployment, is driven by 'ISR' –intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance." Williams, Brunstetter & Jimenez-Bacardi (pg. 191) all note that the costs of drone warfare borne by operators, targets, and bystanders are just as significantly *psychological* as physical.

enhanced surveillance abilities of drones with lethal weaponry enables military operations which were impossible only decades ago, and the following paragraphs outline why armed drones also make their new abilities more likely to be put to use.

Weaponized or Combat UAVs (CUAVs) are quite unlike nuclear weapons, whose sheer destructive force necessitated the formation of international non-government organizations like the IAEA and institutions such as the NPT to limit their development, proliferation, and use. Enabling factors surrounding drones, however, may yet make them "More Dangerous Than Nuclear Weapons," by Richard Falk's provocatively titled account.[34] Being objectively a weapon of mass destruction makes normative evaluation of nuclear weapons relatively clear: total annihilation does not admit varied interpretation because all interpreters will have been annihilated. Drones can't hold a candle to a nuclear holocaust, but their objectively lesser destructiveness has allowed them to be used in secret, most commonly against the universally despised phenomenon of terrorism, which states have long struggled to address effectively. Use of these weapons is thereby subject to ongoing debate, with powerful but offsetting arguments in support and opposition. The lack of moral consensus against them has meant that CUAV technology is almost entirely unrestricted, and attempts at multilateral regulation are in their infancy. Most prominently, Buchanan and Keohane's recent proposal for a drone accountability regime faces a steep, uphill battle.

Fundamental to the feasibility of regulating drones is their status as "different" from conventional force, uniquely enabling, and at least as morally problematic as other weapons which have been successfully banned or regulated globally. Richard Burns finds that arms control regimes invariably form and persist only after new technologies have been introduced into declared battle zones.[35] After observing clear cases of how the new weapon is used, philosophers and other scholars in the modern era attempt to integrate the

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[34] See legal scholar Richard Falk's chapter, "Why Drones Are More Dangerous Than Nuclear Weapons," in Cohn (Ed.).
[35] On pg. 63, Burns also offers the observation that outright outlawing of weapons is rare and thankfully rises in effectiveness according to how "immoral" or "inhumane" the weapons are.

novel practice or tactic into an evolving tradition of Just War, usually in the secondary *jus in bello* stage.[36]

Without moral outrage from either misuse of a new technology, as in a massacre, or a judgment that the technology is inherently unfit for use in civilized warfare, local outcry is insufficient to cohere in a global consensus. Various attempts at highlighting the injustices of drone strikes range from documentary films like *Unmanned* to philosophical parables like Kaag's adaptation of *The Ring of Gyges*,[37] but these and scholarly warnings about slippery slopes to war have yet to capture our moral imaginations as a nation. Differentiating the possibly immoral effects of drone strikes from humanitarian uses of surveillance drones is another incompletely met challenge, highlighted by UAV advocates like David Whetham. Others like Bradley Strawser, Kasher & Plaw believe the use of drones in combat is a moral imperative, as they reduce both the need for "boots on the ground" and the risk of harm to soldiers already deployed on the battlefield.[38] Even where official CCP and Pakistani government statements claim excessive civilian casualties, much of the global citizenry still sees only high-tech, surgically precise elimination of terrorists. Indeed, Scharrer & Blackburn find that media exposure to the graphic effects of drone strikes only increases Americans' "concern" about drones, having no effect on their support of strikes. It may, thus, be premature to expect international cooperation on an issue whose inherent moral evaluations and more objective effects in determining warfare advantages are at best unsettled.[39]

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[36] Brunstetter & Braun find drone usage sufficiently disruptive, by means of exploiting cracks in international law regarding warfare, that a new category *jus ad vim* should be created. Casey-Maslen, Williams, and several authors in Finkelstein et al. also use Just War as a frame of analysis.

[37] Kaag & Kreps, Chapter 5.

[38] See Strawser (Ed.) and the chapter "Distinguishing Drones: An Exchange" by Kasher & Plaw in the same volume.

[39] Hu Chen makes precisely this point, that making, using and losing drones to accidents will determine what a "good" UAV is, in this article: http://mil.sohu.com/20150306/n409377506.shtml "*Chen Hu: Shijie zui zao de wurenji zuozhan fasheng zai zhongmei zhijian*" (Hu Chen: The world's first drone war took place between China and the U.S.) In one of few articles from a more scholarly journal rather than popular media, Ran Dai attempts a literature review on drones in high-tech warfare which is heavy on numbered points but light on coherence. If this article is at all authoritative, which it may not be, the PRC's selection of relevant documents for a literature review on the legality of drones and their future regulation is very different: www.xzbu.com/4/view-6111153.htm "*Wo guo junyong wurenji de falv guizhi ji falv yingdui xenxian zongshu*" (Literature Review: Legal regulations and laws on our nation's military UAVs) (Originally published in 青年与社会 *Qingnian yu Shehui, Youth and Society.* Jun. 2014. 16:562: pg. 71-72)

In terms of pure capabilities, Sonnenberg and Zakaria dissect in separate volumes the image of a "surgical strike."[40] The precision of virtually face-to-face drone technology, according to drone advocates, allows targets to be pinpointed and eliminated with ever-decreasing "collateral damage" to civilian lives, infrastructure, and one's own military forces. The ability to "loiter" for far longer than manned vehicles allows drone operators to wait until the target presents himself as optimally vulnerable.[41] Precision also includes the belief that drone strikes may be so precise as to avoid detection, except by immediate targets, as evidenced in the U.S. strategy of "plausible deniability," which prevailed until the 2012 acknowledgment, given by John Brennan.[42]

Brennan's speech and the Obama Administration's ongoing defense of the practice of drone strikes necessitate that a war framework be used to justify transgressions of sovereignty. Whereas the war paradigm gains this—and the allowance of killing legally without due process of law—partially by claims to justice, wars other than America's "Global War on Terror" have previously been limited in geographic scope. Drones' unique ability to strike their non-state targets precisely allows for the argument that these can be conducted outside of declared war zones *and* cannot be considered violations of state sovereignty. An image of surgical precision and low detectability, combined with the lower financial costs of producing drones, makes them more attractive for states to send on sensitive or secret missions, such as those which cross international borders under questionable legality. Michael Boyle argues that such missions, when discovered, are more likely to incite international crises, possibly escalating to full-scale war.[43] The table below offers a slightly

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[40] See Sonnenberg's chapter, "Why Drones Are Different," in Fisk & Ramos' 2015 book and Zakaria's in Cortright et al.
[41] The male pronoun is used intentionally here, as targets of strikes are overwhelmingly male, and indeed critical accounts question the wholesale treatment of the "military-aged male" demographic as legitimate targets, blurring statistics on how terrorists versus civilian deaths are counted. See Allinson's "The Necropolitics of Drones" for a detailed case of this phenomenon and its moral issues.
[42] Brunstetter and Jimenez-Bacardi are primarily concerned with the transition of this problematic but limited paradigm toward a more expansive one which highlights the advantages of drone strikes while obscuring at least as many legal and moral challenges.
[43] The dangers of escalation or "spirals" are mainly analyzed in Boyle's 2013 article but also repeatedly appear in the 2014 article on proliferation.

more formal visualization of why a technologically capable state would conduct drone strikes in another

country.

Achieving objectives in foreign territories outside declared war zones requires a "measure short of war"

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"Surgical strike" is ideal (more precise/less destructive than conventional bombing, which is considered an "act of war")

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Costs less than air strikes or deployment of ground troops → Conduct Drone Strikes Abroad ← Grave security threat posed by individual or (non-state) organization beyond domestic borders

No risk of own casualties →

↑

Live capture unfeasible (too costly/slow)

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Legally processing & detainment of suspects is politically problematic
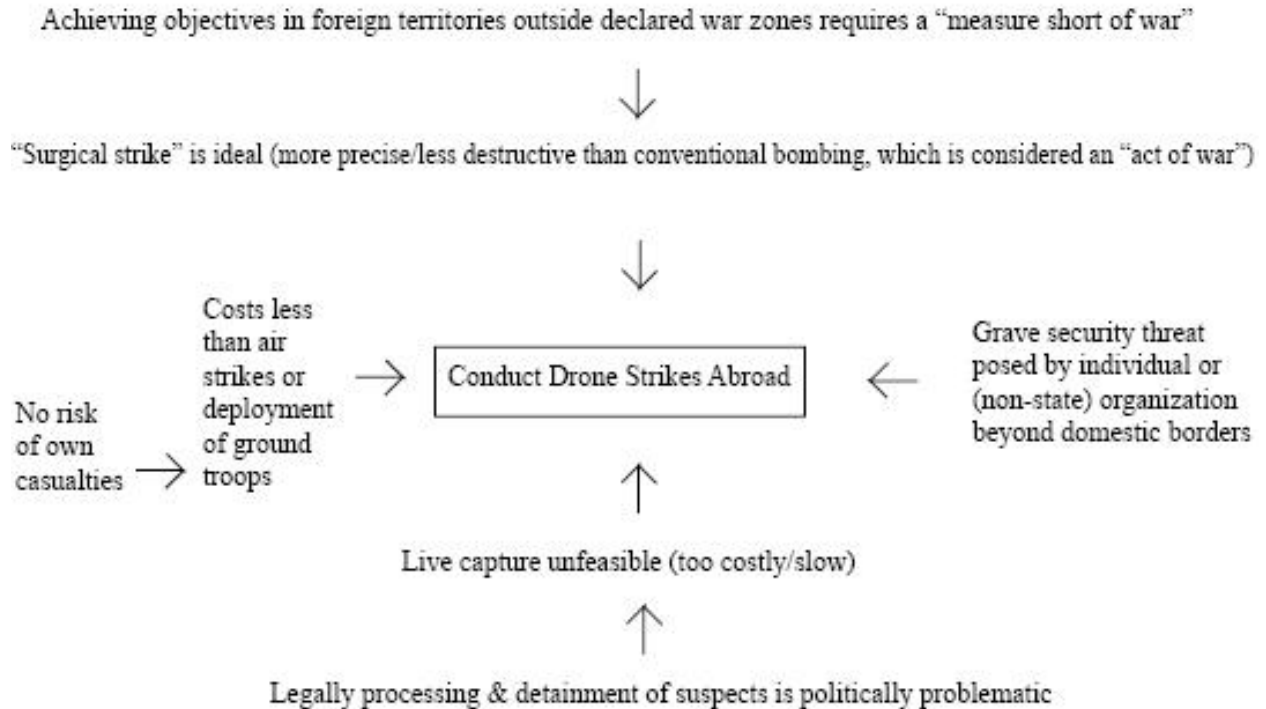
FIGURE 1: Why would a state conduct drone strikes abroad?

In summary, advocates and critics alike generally agree that drones are a revolutionary or at least

highly disruptive force which will continue to be difficult to classify and regulate. Only skeptics like Carvin,

Joshi & Stein, and Gilli & Gilli significantly dispute this thesis, but they generally critique the scope and

depth of impact, not the fact that drones enable new tactics or that states with armed drones may be more

likely to use force to achieve national objectives. Furthermore, and critical to the present study, the latter

two articles largely neglect the role of China, which the following section synthesizes.

Moral and legal challenges presented by drone strikes include 1) violations of sovereignty, 2) drone

strikes' status as a law enforcement issue or one of declared war, 3) the likelihood that lowered costs of

using force will result in expanded CUAV usage and thereby a net increase in innocent civilian deaths, 4)

transparency issues, 5) proliferation to states which do not uphold human rights and to non-state actors such as terrorists.[44] Realism predicts that states will overlook these challenges in pursuit of military superiority. Institutional liberalism and constructivism predict that effective regulation of CUAVs is possible and likely, though resting on a foundation of a globally diffused norm which has yet to form fully even in the liberal West. While drones mean different things according to who uses them and how they are used, as with any tool or weapon, it is impossible to argue that the technology has not enabled highly consequential new practices in IR.

To restate the "Drone Revolution" thesis: By their nature as relatively inexpensive, non-intrusive, reductive of risk to one's own military personnel, viewed publically as "precise" and a force for good against "evil" terrorists, drones *enable* new measures short of war for states to achieve their objectives by force and thereby make the use of force *more likely*.

Chinese Drones as a "Critical" or "Crucial" Case. The preceding sections' "China Threat" and "Drone Revolution" narratives imbricate and to a large extent substantiate one another. China's growing capacity to use force combines with a motive of hegemonic ambition or simply dissatisfaction with the status quo, and CUAVs enable the use of force "short of" what all sides agree would be a catastrophic war.[45] Even if China wants neither to challenge the U.S. directly with its own drones or hegemonic war

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[44] This list is greatly truncated. Mark Woods' review of Cohn (Ed.) begins with a "partial list" of "arguments people use to condemn killing via remote-controlled drones" and contains no fewer than 22 items.

[45] An obvious alternative to measuring China's challenge in the realm of violent coercion would be in the economic realm. Analogous to comparing the size and sophistication of U.S. and PRC drone arsenals would be comparing the size of each economy and GDP growth rates. Similar to the logic of comparing how drones are *used* by these states is a provocatively titled study, "China's Dominance Hypothesis and the Emergence of a Tri-polar Global Currency System," by Fratzscher & Mehl. They suggest that the Chinese *renminbi* (RMB), despite its non-convertibility and rigidly regulated exchange rate, is emerging as a "key driver of currency movements in Asia," suggesting a challenge to the dollar as the global reserve currency. They stop short of describing the RMB an alternative reserve currency, instead calling it a regional "anchor currency." Cyberwarfare would be another, even more high-tech arena for comparison, and this study generally struggles not to become a rote Sino-U.S. comparative policy piece.

immediately, the PRC still has strong incentives to test its new technologies outside of practice drills to be sure that if an auspicious day of confrontation comes, the PLA will be up to the challenge.[46]

If the rising PRC is a prototypical anti-liberal "revisionist power" and it has opportunities to employ drones, as cutting-edge technology which offers military advantages at low costs, we should expect the PRC's drone *use*—not only capacity– to match its growing might. We should not expect a revisionist power to refrain from emulating the hegemon whose liberal order it is challenging in widespread, frequent use of a highly enabling weapon. If CUAVs are uniquely suited for counter-terrorism operations, and the PRC claims to face terrorist threats both domestically and internationally[47], we should expect China to use its drones to address the problem. Fisk & Ramos in particular strongly suggest that China may be at the forefront of a "norm cascade" embracing the preventive use of force, and drone technology is uniquely suited for exhibiting this acceptance.[48] Together, these lines of reasoning position the PRC as nearing a rare example of the "crucial case." This section details the study's methodology.

A single case study such as this must remain clearly focused theoretically, lest it become "a haphazard collection of material" on Chinese drones. Such a collection would be important and

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[46] This is to say that, from a realist perspective, the U.S. military and intelligence agencies have a significant advantage in having conducted drone strikes on countless occasions, whereas the PLA and Chinese intelligence are weakened by their restraint and lack of experience, especially should CUAVs one day be used in state-to-state combat. Projecting power with UAVs also takes advantage of their status in a legal "gray area," not that realists would be much concerned with codified global prohibitions anyway.

[47] 2014 was perhaps China's deadliest year for terrorism. See Haider, Chien-peng Chung, and PRC media generally for explanations of ethnic unrest originating externally. Chien-peng Chung and Suzanne Ogden (in Crotty, Ed.), writing during a bit of a lull in the mid-2000s, now appear overly optimistic. The security apparatus in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) handles its "Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure", as described by Bolt et al., Laruelle & Peyrouse, and most recently Wallace. Chinese media also notes that hundreds of Chinese citizens, mainly Uyghurs, have attempted to join ISIL in Iraq and Syria. The matter of whether the PRC faces any organized terrorists is taken up by Reed & Raschke's book on the ETIM. Terrorism will be a recurring theme throughout the empirical sections.

[48] They argue that the BRICs and some European countries which opposed the 2003 invasion of Iraq now see the benefits of preventive use of force and will emulate the U.S. in missions applying the concept. Perhaps Russia has been the best case for indicating acceptance of the norm, though the "preventive" aggression came via conventional military force in the Ukraine.

interesting but do relatively little for theory testing and development.[49] Instead, the present study aspires to be valuable as a critical or crucial case in a modification of Harry Eckstein's concept.[50]

The truly crucial case is one which fits the terms of the theory in question almost perfectly. The case's contradiction or failure to illustrate the theorized relationship between independent and dependent variables would severely undermine confidence in its validity. Alternatively, as Gerring notes, if the theory's predictions are not "terrifically precise, well elaborated, or broad [..., the theory...] must take a consistent (a.k.a. invariant, deterministic) form."[51] Both realism's PTT and the more revolutionary, disruptive accounts of UAVs meet this criterion of context-independent determinism. As naturally occurring crucial cases are exceedingly rare, Gerring encourages researchers to "evaluate potential cases in terms of their *degree of crucialness*."[52]

In both accounts, China should be a highly crucial "easy test." If the narratives of China as a revisionist power and drones as an enabling, disruptive, revolutionary technology are imprecisely specified, we can nonetheless posit the PRC as a "most-likely" case to test the "China Threat" and the "Drone Revolution" theses. A "least-likely" case may be less obvious, but by the accounts of skeptics like Joshi & Stein or Gilli & Gilli, any poor or technologically backward developing country with no interest or capacity to challenge the liberal world order would be a good candidate.   If China is shown to be highly restrained or "responsible" in its CUAV deployment, upholding liberal standards such as the rule of international law, one or both theories' validity will be tarnished. Labeled as an anti-liberal great power, the PRC in Schweller & Pu's "Spoiler Scenario" should also be a crucially least-likely case to exhibit the restraining power of international law, often criticized as weak and supra-structural by neorealists.

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[49] Burnham et al., pg. 54, for the quoted precaution. Previous versions of this study exemplify this problem.
[50] See Eckstein's chapter, "Case Studies and Theory in Political Science," in Greenstein & Polsby (Eds.). Burnham et al. use the term "critical case" in place of other authors' preference for "crucial case." Arguably, the term "critical" could have a dual meaning (or be confused) in the PRC's case with the criticism directed at U.S. drone strikes.
[51] Gerring, pg. 120.
[52] Gerring, pg. 120. Emphasis in original.

No single case in the social sciences can disprove an entire theory, just as confirmatory evidence can only "corroborate" and not prove one to be true. Additionally, among studies utilizing the crucial case framework, Peters finds a bias in publishing confirmatory results more often than disconfirming evidence.[53] Rather than falsification, the current study seeks to weaken theoretical predictions of U.S.-China conflict leading inevitably to catastrophic, great power war. Such a war would indeed be sure to ruin the global economy, but its realization rests on avoidable contingencies. The following sections on China's growing UAV arsenal, statements on U.S. drone strikes, and UAV proliferation provide evidence that both the "China Threat" and "Drone Revolution" narratives have been overstated, with careful attention to remain grounded in IR theory. Before moving on, the argument[54] can be stated as follows:

- If 1. The PRC is a rising, anti-liberal, high-tech military power, 2. China faces security threats from non-state actors (terrorists), 3. China seeks to challenge and surpass the U.S. as "the unipole" **_and_** 4. CUAV technology is revolutionizing international relations by enabling new means of power projection, we should expect the PRC to use its CUAV arsenal in a _more expansive_ way than the U.S.

- Instead, China defends weak international law and criticizes the U.S. on moral grounds, building but _**not using**_ its growing CUAV arsenal.

- China is, however, taking advantage of U.S. restrictions on sales of CUAVs by selling to states the U.S. finds "irresponsible."

Having established the PRC as the case to be studied, the remaining sections consider evidence from the state's experience with its own UAVs and published remarks on drone strikes.

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[53] Peters, pg. 150
[54] Readers demanding an independent and dependent variable formulation are unlikely to be appeased by this feeble attempt, but to be explicit in overdetermination: IVs = anti-liberal values, security threats from non-state actors, systemic revisionist intent, enabling weaponry → DV = drone strikes (use of CUAVs for targeted killing)

China's UAVs & Statements on U.S. Drone Strikes. This section examines Chinese statements on U.S. drone strikes as well as cases of Chinese use and non-use of UAVs internally and externally.[55] The discussion will focus on providing evidence that the "China Threat" and "Drone Revolution" arguments previously presented do not combine in the way proponents of PTT or liberal critics of the PRC would predict.

As with most countries, Chinese commentators are almost uniformly critical of U.S. drone strikes. One prominent position is that the Bin Laden raid made "targeted killing" a debatable issue, rather than something clearly illegal and never justifiable. Since 2013, articles in *Southern Metropolis Daily* and *People's Daily* assert that global discourse on drone strikes has shifted from universal condemnation toward possible means of regulation.[56] This may be as much a result of a "norm cascade" described by Fisk & Ramos, with drone-equipped states coming to accept "preventive self-defense," as a realization that persuading the U.S. to cease drone strikes is futile.[57] Alternatively, global terrorism could be on the rise, and the effectiveness of drone strikes to counter it will become a critical issue across an ever-widening set of states.

China's own terrorist concerns are formidable and centered on radical Islamist non-state actors not dissimilar to those the U.S. labels imminent security threats. China's own restrictive policies may be generating a far greater radicalization of its Muslim citizens, with 2014's most gruesome attack in Kunming perpetrated by Uyghurs who had attempted unsuccessfully to emigrate. Over 300 Chinese citizens are

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[55] For basic information on China's growing drone capacity, see United States Dept. of Defense; Springer, pg. 84-7; Hsu; Easton & Hsiao; and the Rand Corporation for a "just the facts" account of newer developments. This study is focused on use and non-use rather than capacity alone.

[56] http://news.163.com/14/0921/06/A6L5SPAN00014Q4P.html "*Dingdian qingchu: fankong xin zhao?*" (Targeted Killings: A New Counter-terror Contagion?) Sept. 21, 2014. The same position is taken by Yabin Liang here: http://opinion.people.com.cn/n/2014/0617/c1003-25160664.html "*Gaibian xiandai zhanzheng moshi dailai junbeijingsai weixian: wuzhuang wurenji, yinfa zhili he lunli nanti*" (Changing modern methods of war brings dangers of arms races: armed drones lead to difficult problems for regulations and ethics) Jun. 17, 2014.

[57] It could be that first use of new weapons technology which later proves to be morally problematic, banned or never used again, may be a hegemonic privilege which the U.S. enjoyed for nuclear weapons and now armed drones.

thought to have joined the Islamic State, mostly emigrating via Malaysia,[58] and some of them have returned

to the PRC's Xinjiang region.[59] While skepticism of the CCP's care in distinguishing between ISIL

returnees who are disillusioned with jihad versus those who return to wage it in China is warranted, so far

only surveillance drones have been acknowledged to play any role in the government's counter-terrorism

operations.[60] Evidently, the line between using drones for surveillance and targeted killing will not be

crossed lightly, even by this authoritarian regime. Still, with comparable CUAV capacity to the U.S. and a

similar if not greater "terrorist" threat, the CCP's restraint is puzzling and beyond the already speculative

scope of this study.

Judging by Chinese media, opposition to U.S. strikes and self-restraint are likely the manifestation

of the government's sensitivity to its image compared to America's and a tendency to err on the side of

caution. Yabin Liang, writing for the International Strategy Research Institute of the Party School of the

Central Committee of the CCP (The Central Party School), acknowledges that drones are a more

intelligent, "surgical" weapon, but he echoes the negative side of the "Drone Revolution" thesis more loudly.

In his *People's Daily* editorial, one of the most substantial Chinese statements on drone strikes this study has

found, he worries that states will be increasingly tempted to use pre-emptive force as a first resort. Almost

paraphrasing Boyle, he uses the Chinese phrase 擦枪走火 *caqiang zouhuo* (shoot accidentally while polishing a

gun) to describe the danger that an international incident may escalate unintentionally as a result of

showing off a state's technical prowess with UAVs. Liang believes the swiftness with which armed drones

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[58] http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2015-01-23/062831434338.shtml "*Zhongguo 300 duo ming kongbufenzi jing Dama deng guo canjia IS*" (Over 300 Chinese terrorists have passed through Malaysia and other countries to join the Islamic State) Jan. 23, 2015.

[59] Massoud Hayoun, "ISIL fighters arrested in China's Xinjiang, politicician says," *Al Jazeera* Mar. 10, 2015. http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/3/10/beijing-isil-fighters-arrested-in-china.html   The article references this article in Chinese: http://news.qq.com/a/20150310/039878.htm "*Zhang Chunxian: Xinjiang que you ren yuejing canjia yisilanguo*" (Zhang Chunxian: Xinjiang people are indeed crossing the border to participate in the Islamic State) Mar. 10, 2015.

[60] http://uav.huanqiu.com/yyc/2015-06/6585598.html "*Wurenji zhu Xinjiang fankong: zai mangmang Gebi faxian jiduanfenzi wo peng*" (Drones help counter-terrorism in Xinjiang: Extremist hideout discovered in vast Gobi) June 6, 2015. This mixed article was almost equal in its praise of drones as of the Party for finding a camp near the Kazakh border, but it's a tease in terms of details of who and what were actually found and what happened. The headline is tucked away in a few sentences amidst general UAV technical and commercial information.

may be sent on a pre-emptive strike also raises general levels of tension within the military, increasing the likelihood of misinterpreting signals from all sides.

Liang's editorial saves the harshest criticism for the U.S. practice of targeted killing with drone strikes, finding common cause with Brooks on the challenge these present to sovereignty and international law in general. The timing of his article coincided with China's most official statement on drone usage, in June 2014. At the United Nations 28th Meeting of the 28th Regular Session of the Human Rights Commission, the PRC's representative, Ms. Yang Liang, criticized "other countries" (obliquely, the U.S.) for violating the UN Charter and conducting "extraterritorial attacks" which violate sovereignty, compromise "territorial integrity," and result mainly in the deaths of "innocent civilians."[61] Both Yabin Liang and Yang Liang explicitly highlight UAVs' positive uses, which China exemplifies and publicizes,[62] but restraint in using lethal force is most evidently lacking in the technological and hegemonic leader.[63] Why should an anti-liberal, rising China be more restrained with its armed drones than the leader of the liberal world order?

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[61] See United Nations. In a video spanning multiple hours, Yang Liang speaks from approximately 55:55 to 57:10.
[62] There are countless articles on China's innovative drone applications online. A few follow:
www.camn.agri.gov.cn/Html/2014_09_22/2_23354_2014_09_22_26602.html "Nongyong wurenji de zhuyao yongtu" (The Main Uses of Agricultural Drones) Sept. 22, 2014. http://gs.legaldaily.com.cn/content/2014-10/27/content_5816087.htm?node=32228 "Lanzhou dongfang yong shang wurenji kong zhong zhuapai huanjing weifa" (Lanzhou city introduces drones to help capture environmental criminals) Oct. 27, 2014.
http://tieba.baidu.com/p/3157954276 "Wurenji zai Zhongguo shenqi zuoyong" (The magical uses of drones in China) July 7, 2014. Clearly there is a matter of prestige involved in these kinds of articles documenting the first use of drones for a particular purpose.
[63] Crawford's piece responding to Keohane & Buchanan's proposal for regulation, is among the most forceful on the point of needing to rein in the U.S. before drones have any hope of being regulated internationally.
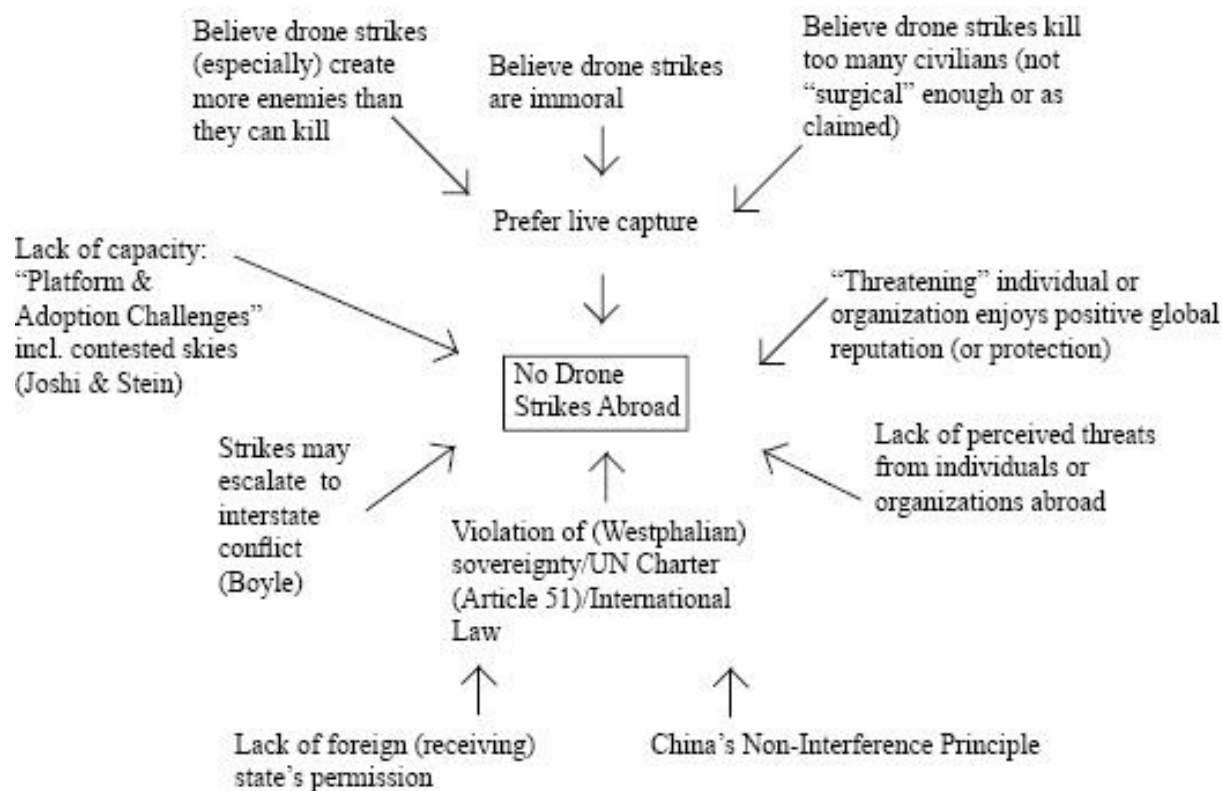
Believe drone strikes (especially) create more enemies than they can kill

Believe drone strikes are immoral

Believe drone strikes kill too many civilians (not "surgical" enough or as claimed)

Prefer live capture

Lack of capacity: "Platform & Adoption Challenges" incl. contested skies (Joshi & Stein)

"Threatening" individual or organization enjoys positive global reputation (or protection)

No Drone Strikes Abroad

Strikes may escalate to interstate conflict (Boyle)

Lack of perceived threats from individuals or organizations abroad

Violation of (Westphalian) sovereignty/UN Charter (Article 51)/International Law

Lack of foreign (receiving) state's permission

China's Non-Interference Principle

FIGURE 2: Why might a state *not* conduct drone strikes beyond its borders?

Foreign policy in the PRC remains guided by what it calls a principle of non-interference, 不干涉原则 *bu ganshe yuanze,* in the internal affairs of other states. Duchatel et al. point out that, despite growing domestic debate which may one day support Fisk & Ramos' "norm cascade," China's identity as a developing country demands that it respect the sovereignty of weaker states. Forsaking this founding principle of the regime would damage the credibility of China's commitment to "peaceful development" and "not seeking hegemony." Without consent of the country into which CUAVs would be sent, the PLA has shown considerable restraint, perhaps even a different rationality based on strict interpretation and respect of international law rather than material self-interest and security. With these issues in mind, the following paragraphs offer examples of how China has chosen to use or not use its UAV arsenal.

Not only admitted but proudly declared in Chinese media, the PRC uses drones for surveillance along its land and maritime borders, an application controversial to the extent of the territorial claims themselves. This is especially true of the Senkaku-Diaoyu Islands and the South China Sea, where a Chinese UAV was sent in Sept., 2013, and U.S. intelligence drones currently monitor controversial land reclamation.[64] Michael Boyle, for one, finds Chinese deployment of drones in the disputed Senkaku-Diaoyu Islands to confound expectations of restraint given by Erickson & Strange in *Foreign Affairs*.[65] Yet the Chinese response to Japan's warning that it would shoot down China's drones if they returned has not exceeded heated rhetoric in the two years since the incident was reported.[66] The world is watching how China will comport itself in Asia and the liberal, global community of international institutions, and acts perceived to be aggressive in disputed lands or seas would explode the "low profile" Deng Xiaoping advised the PRC to keep. A Dec. 2014 report to the *People's Daily* by Jie Li, with no apparent appreciation of the hypocrisy pointed at the U.S., asserts that it would be illegal for Japan to use a drone to monitor the disputed islands.[67] Even if China uses drones as a tool to probe sensitive issues and territories again, international arenas are where the CCP appears to be most restrained, accommodating, and solicitous of cooperation.

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[64] www.legalweekly.cn/index.php/Index/article/id/3825 "Wurenji: Youli guoji lifa zhiwai" (Drones: Outside of International Law). Oct. 29, 2013. This is a translated article from the Japanese media reporting on a Chinese drone in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Japan warns China to stay away, that it may shoot down drones that invade Japanese airspace.

[65] Boyle, pg. 89, believes China is using drones as a way to assert its sovereignty claims in a low-cost way with controllable risk, though he points out that "testing nerves" of Japan and other powerful nations is actually quite likely to escalate. Popular nationalist outcry might be one path to escalation. Articles on the disputed islands tend to get a lot more exposure and popular commentary in the PRC, and books like James Reilly's suggest that popular opinion has become surprisingly influential in Chinese foreign policy, particularly Sino-Japanese relations.

[66] http://military.china.com/topic/zhjp/11166312/20140917/18794789.html "Zhonghua junping: rimei dacuotecuo Zhongguo xianyou wurenji zugou yong" (Chinese Military Commentary: The Japanese media are gravely mistaken if they think China has enough drones already) Sept. 17, 2014. This is a widely reprinted article on the standoff over whether Japan's shooting down of Chinese drones over the Senkaku-Diaoyu Islands would be taken as an act of war It notes the attention paid to the ongoing island dispute and claims that Japan is envious of China's large but inexpensive arsenal.

[67] http://news.dayoo.com/world/201412/08/10001278_111292985.htm "Zhuanjia: Riruo yong wurenji zhencha Diaoyu Dao Zhongguo jiang caiqu xingdong" (Expert: Japan to monitor Diaoyu Islands with a Drone, China to adopt countermeasures) Dec. 8, 2014.

When might the CCP use combat drones on its domestic population?[68] Factors favoring domestic

use include technical and logistical hurdles to deploying drones internationally, as described by Joshi &

Stein. Most issues they mention, such as requiring an intelligence apparatus and uncontested skies, rather

fade away above one's own territory. The utility of armed drones in crowd control and dispersing rioters is

obvious, especially as they are by altitude alone even less vulnerable than well-armored riot police.[69]

Presumably the regime would much prefer surveillance and imprisonment over targeted killing of even the

most vocal, liberal dissident,[70] but where social stability and terrorism intersect, restrained state responses

are less likely. Public disorder has been on the rise since the turn of the 21ˢᵗ century, and drones would

greatly enhance the current law-enforcement strategy of arresting leaders of would-be movements and the

prevention of "issue linkage" across different geographic regions.

China can hardly expect to become inured to "mass incidents" and by most accounts is showing

itself to be sensitive to the point of paranoia, seeing potential to spread disorder and terrorist threats in

basic expressions of ethnic identity. From March to November 2014, the PRC was subject to at least six

major attacks, totaling over 200 deaths and at least as many casualties, by notoriously doctored official

statistics. There is, however, much debate about whether the incidents are in any way connected or

organized by a single entity with a recognizable chain of command.[71] The strategy of singling out group

leaders for persecution is one the CCP has long used in response to protests, but a counter-terror strategy

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[68] An armed drone simply flying over an unwelcome public gathering might accomplish the Party's goals of crowd dispersion. At least at first, no shots might need to be fired, but it is easy to imagine warning shots becoming necessary and ultimately actually firing on crowds if this became ineffective.

[69] Being a democracy with similar crowd control problems is advantageous for domestic drone innovations in India, as Lucknow's April 2015 trials of pepper spray-equipped UAVs attest. See CNN: www.cnn.com/2015/04/09/asia/india-police-drones/ Were the PRC to have been the first to attempt this, there would likely be far greater outcry. Perhaps China is content to restrain itself until democracies and pariah states have ironed out globally acceptable repressive and invasive drone deployment practices.

[70] See Xu & Hua, Johnson, and Pan's books for examples of how the CCP treats political activists.

[71] Reed and Raschke's book on the ETIM suggests that multiple groups exist, but their capacities to organize and conduct terrorist acts are probably very limited. Membership, support, or sympathy is also blurred by general resentment among both Uyghur and Tibetan populations as a result of restrictive policies behind guises of "autonomy".

similar to the U.S. "decapitation" of leaders by drone strikes presumes not only a strong intelligence network but also the existence of coherent, hierarchically structured organizations to target.[72]
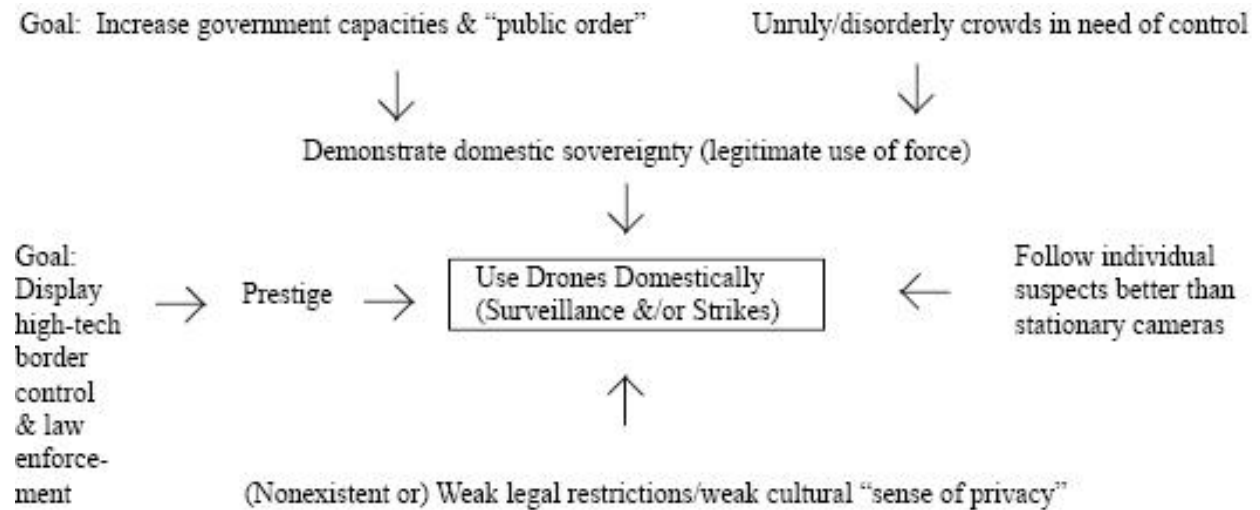

FIGURE 3: Why would a state use drones for surveillance or strikes within its borders?

Expat Uyghur and Tibetan advocacy groups around the world naturally would reject any accusation akin to "aiding and abetting" terrorists, but some have speculated about how the U.S. counter-terror tactic of drone strikes would look with the PLA at the controls.[73] Most available information regarding recent terrorist attacks in 2014 comes from PRC media or human rights and Uyghur advocacy groups, each of which presents its own problems for research.

China's relationship with ISIL was mentioned earlier to compare Chinese and American responses, but the Islamic State should not blot out threats from Al-Qaeda and other sources beyond domestic borders. As maintained throughout Haider's article, the CCP sees a foreign hand guiding anti-state violence, lending

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[72] Notably, Chinese media also use the term "decapitation" for drone strikes targeting a single individual.
[73] A rather sensational, distasteful article on whether the CCP might target the Dalai Lama with a drone strike draws the problem of differing definitions of terrorists entirely too starkly: www.commondreams.org/views/2013/02/22/what-if-chinese-killed-dalai-lama-drone-strike Whether Rebiya Kadeer's lower profile and influence would make her a better or worse target is best kept out of academic works, however speculative this one is.

little or no legitimacy to stated grievances of disorderly elements.[74] Global NGOs and most liberal

observers deride restrictive policies and the lack of an option for peaceful dissent or protest in the PRC,

even as violence in 2014 has been directed at civilians, in line with standard definitions of terrorism. State

estimates of deaths, themselves higher than ever at over 200 for 2014, are likely lowered with the intent to

defuse tensions and obscure state counter-terrorism death figures. Uyghur advocacy groups like the World

Uyghur Congress and the Uyghur American Association, in direct contrast, already allege that the PRC has

used drones against Uyghur civilians, and their estimates of deaths from the police rounding up suspects

and generally oppressing the population of what they call "East Turkistan" or "Uyghurstan" are in the

thousands.[75]

The potential for the CCP to use its drones against large groups or in war should not be discounted,

but there has also been one prominent case in recent years when the Party nearly followed the U.S.

precedent of conducting an international strike. The incident is relevant to the global concerns of Kaag &

Kreps as well as Lloyd Gardner about whether targeted killing may be the preferred option to entering the

overburdened U.S. court system.   Their concern almost certainly applies to China's domestic legal

challenges as well as the economics of U.S. targeted killing.[76] In that regard, although certainly revealed for

propaganda purposes, the example of the Naw Kham raid is somewhat heartening, to be discussed in the

following paragraphs.

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[74] Laruelle & Peyrouse discount the possibility of any Pan-Uyghur movement uniting the diverse populations within China, numbering about 8 million, and throughout Central Asia, numbering 300,000, especially as most governments in the region are bound within the SCO and view the PRC positively as a source of trade and investment. Notably, they devote very little attention to ETIM, treating the deadly 2007 clash between Chinese security forces and a "would-be training camp" near the Tajik border as an isolated incident.

[75] http://xj.people.com.cn/n/2014/0817/c188521-22013482.html "*Xinjiang Shache Xian: Tejing caokong wurenji soubu baokong fenzi*" (Xinjiang Shache County: SWAT teams use drones to hunt and arrest violent terrorists) Aug. 17, 2014. The article from state media which prompted the Uyghur associations to express their concern and make the allegations of combat drone usage notes mainly that UAVs were deployed to support SWAT teams' raids. It is extremely brief coverage, likely the result of careful editing from multiple levels of government. The article is posted only months after the first use of drones by the PSB in Xinjiang. http://www.xjdaily.com.cn/xinjiang/002/1089894.shtml "Xinjiang gong'an shouci shiyong wurenji zhiqin" (Xinjiang PSB makes first use of drone surveillance) Jun. 30, 2014.

[76] Kaag & Kreps, pg. 64-5, consider the possibility that drone strikes may be an expedient and less costly alternative to the intractable problem of detaining "enemy combatants" in Guantanamo Bay. In the same vein, Gardner notes that U.S. objectives in Afghanistan have gone from overly ambitious to modest to being unworthy of being called intentional goals. On pg. 179, he notes that even the relatively new and uninspiring "stability ops" had given way to drone strikes as a first and primary tactic, having "replaced counterinsurgency."

Global media paid close attention to the apprehension of Naw Kham, a drug lord in Burma (Myanmar) who had killed several Chinese sailors in 2011, and it was reported that the CCP seriously considered sending an armed drone to kill him.[77] That Party leadership chose to send a conventional team of police instead of conducting a drone strike is at least one case where an opportunity to emulate U.S. practices was declined, where capture was chosen despite the difficulties involved. Notably, the mission to capture the transnational criminal required far more resources and coordination, including some 200 law officers, than a drone strike might have.[78] The case suggests that even where government consent might be obtained, as was certainly needed to send Chinese agents into Burma, moral reservations might prevent a Chinese drone strike.

That we know anything about the case suggests the intention of the CCP to impart its own views of responsible *non*-use of armed UAVs. Revealing the "process" of a particular pursuit of an international criminal in state media served multiple propagandistic purposes.[79] The Party likely wished to make its high-tech "arrival" known, joining an elite group of states with the capacity to conduct drone strikes abroad. This fits the generally positive tone of PRC media on CCP leadership and the PLA, in line with Horowitz & Fuhrmann's motive of enhancing prestige. The thoughts of "just dropping a bomb from the sky" on a location where Naw Kham was suspected to be hiding are portrayed as inconsiderate manifestations of "anxiousness" rather than a responsible option. And to parallel but contrast with President Obama's statements of personal responsibility for all lethal strike decisions, an apparently greater sense of

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[77] Articles by Perlez and Hong are rather more headline click bait than substantive discussion of Chinese drone policy, unfortunately. Both mention that the global response to U.S. strikes, rather than doubts about the technology, played a role in dissuading officials from "dropping a bomb from the sky". The Hong article is curious for appearing a full year after the incident was reported in Chinese media.

[78] The Burmese jungle is undoubtedly a difficult place to coordinate international law enforcement, and Sino-Burmese relations were briefly disrupted in March 2015 by a more conventional "death from the sky" accident in the ongoing conflicts between the Burmese government and ethnic minorities. In response to a bomb which killed Chinese citizens near the border, the Burmese government apologized and promised to send unarmed drones (unclear where the military obtained them) to monitor the restive frontier region: http://military.china.com/news2/569/20150317/19390495.html "*Miandian jundui chudong meiyouguadan de wurenji zhencha guogan diqu*" (Burmese military dispatches unarmed drones to investigate restive region) Mar. 17, 2015.

[79] Notably, the CCP largely rejects the distinction between news and propaganda, asserting that Western media always contain an agenda to sway popular opinion. The didactic tone in most U.S. media, I would argue, is considerably less, however, evident in what many Chinese would call a pretense to inform objectively and demarcate editorial content separately.

responsibility is shown in the original Chinese article.[80] The extremely dangerous and strenuous process of capturing Naw Kham is presented as a virtuous act of restraint, in explicit contrast with the killing of Osama Bin Laden and, by association, other terrorist targets. The article emphasizes international cooperation with Burma and Thailand as well as the fact that Chinese task force "lost not a single man." Closing points from the article that no drones or troops were sent across the border, and no foreign civilians were injured, are clearly intended to paint the PRC as more responsible than the U.S. and other countries in pursuit of international criminals or outlaws.[81]

Some have speculated as to whether China's "responsible" choice not to use drones was made out of respect for international law and sovereignty or doubts about its own technology. Joshi & Stein's skepticism that other countries will have the technical capacity to conduct drone strikes in other countries is a clear alternative explanation. Given journalists' difficulty in gaining access to areas of the PRC where armed UAVs may be used domestically, it may not be immediately clear whether this study's predictions regarding international versus domestic use will be borne out empirically. The bravery of skeptics who doubt whether less technically advanced developing countries will ever wield armed drones is admirable but rather shown to be foolhardy in light of the PRC's unrestricted UAV sales, as the following section elucidates.

In summary, what sets China apart from other states is its technical capacity in the form of an advanced drone arsenal, multiple terrorist threats, and a strategy theorized by realists to be revisionist. China's restraint with a technology believed to increase the likelihood of using force strongly suggests that the "China Threat" and "Drone Revolution" theses do not work synergistically or that one or both may be

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[80] http://china.huanqiu.com/local/2013-02/3651930.html *"Zhuan anzu Zhang pilu zhuabu Nuo Kang jingguo: ceng yu pai wurenji zhanshou"* (Leader of Special Investigation Team Reveals the Process of Capturing Naw Kham: There Was Desire to Dispatch UAVs to Decapitate Him) Feb. 18, 2013.

[81] http://orientaldaily.on.cc/cnt/news/20140308/00184_016.html "*Chuguo fankong dao chaoxue zhi nan"* (The Difficulties of Striking Terrorist Lairs Abroad) Mar. 8, 2014. This article by Ma Dingsheng in Hong Kong's *Oriental Daily* notes that the PLA would certainly have to gain consent from the country where strikes took place, lest the act be seen as an invasion. To pursue terrorists in neighboring countries, operations are reliant on international cooperation, intelligence, and airforces. The author emphasizes that after the hit, the PLA would leave the country immediately and completely. In all points Ma seeks to draw distinctions from the American approach.

false. Before this study is dismissed as a praiseful exercise in "panda-hugging," however, the issue of CUAV proliferation must be addressed, casting the PRC in the more unscrupulous light for which markets are roundly criticized.

China & Drone Proliferation.   Scholarly studies on UAV technology, understandably stemming from a U.S.-centric perspective, once treated the PRC as a generator of fear, the first on the list of the "what happens when...gets armed drones?" anti-liberal states. Erickson & Strange, by contrast, found Chinese possession of CUAVs to be so yawn-inducing that their article's headline had to be translated into Chinese as an endorsement of the PRC's constraint. Absent a major domestic or international incidence of abuse, the narrative appears to have shifted to worrying about how regimes *even worse* than the CCP's will use the drones China has sold them.

China's sales to the Middle East and Africa are thus worrying from a human rights perspective, though perhaps helpful to establish "order" in states like the PRC which face serious domestic security challenges. As noted previously, U.S. drone strikes pose a challenge to Westphalian sovereignty, but Chinese drones will most likely be deployed domestically, to shore up control of populations within sovereign territory. If drones are truly transformative and China were to sell them *only* to the ruling regimes, we might expect them to turn the tide in favor of ruling regimes, strengthening their "domestic sovereignty" greatly and perhaps even enabling them to prevail in civil wars. That is probably too tall an order, even for a revolutionary technology.

Other studies on drone proliferation tend to begin by listing a growing number of states which are cultivating a domestic UAV manufacturing industry. This study contends, in partial agreement with Joshi & Stein, Gilli & Gilli, that current global leaders in the technology will continue to dominate the global arms race for the foreseeable future. Being a China centered study, however, it diverges from those authors' doubts that "platform challenges" or "adoption challenges" will keep most states from actually acquiring

armed UAVs. States which cannot produce their own drones face only financial constraints on the number they can buy from China, and it remains to be seen how long U.S. restrictions will limit proliferation to unsavory regimes or non-state actors. Integrating armed drones into regular military operations is certainly an adoption challenge no state has yet demonstrated, but for uses short of interstate war, it is also not one which states must face in pursuit of individual "enemy combatants."

In the midst of a new, global arms race with few prospects for regulation, a global market for surveillance and combat drones appears disconcertingly limitless.[82] Thus far, the U.S., Israel, and China are the leading exporters of UAVs, but of these three only Chinese firms may operate without moral distortions of demand curves.[83] In the cautious words of the RAND Corporation, "China may envision exports of unmanned systems as a profitable way of improving its position in the global arms market and a means of strengthening its diplomatic and security ties with recipient countries."[84]

Determining which states have purchased Chinese drones is subject to a rumor mill at this point, but some hard evidence is available. The Jan. 2015 crash of a Chinese combat drone in Nigeria[85] suggests that it will be very difficult to monitor proliferation and also, given the context in an intra-state war, China continues to provide strong support for whatever regime represents the nation at the UN. Much like China's policies for foreign aid and investment in Africa and elsewhere, no strings appear to be attached to global drone sales.[86] Chinese models may have limited capabilities compared to those manufactured in the

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[82] Boyle, 2013 & 2014, speculates on what an arms race for drones will entail. This is also Yabin Liang's main concern: http://opinion.people.com.cn/n/2014/0617/c1003-25160664.html "*Gaibian xiandai zhanzheng moshi dailai junbeijingsai weixian: wuzhuang wurenji, yinfa zhili he lunli nanti*" (Changing modern methods of war brings dangers of arms races: armed drones lead to difficult problems for regulations and ethics) Jun. 17, 2014.

[83] At the extreme, a liberal consensus that drones strikes contradict our values like biological weapons, land mines, or other prohibition regimes described in Richard Burns' encyclopedic *The Evolution of Arms Control* could, in the fears of hawks affiliated with U.S. arms producers, result in unfettered China gaining a financial and technological edge in the drone industry by merit of selling the most units to the largest number of countries.

[84] See RAND Corporation, pg. 2.

[85] See Rawnsley. Some months later, *Reuters* reported sales to Nigeria here: http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/29/us-china-drones-idUSKBN0NK2SK20150429

[86] China has, however, been criticized for making the contracting of Chinese companies and employment of Chinese laborers a condition for receiving loans, and though the PRC has prevailed in the battle for recognition, the several states with diplomatic relations with Taiwan will not be receiving PRC aid until they change this.

U.S. and Israel and be more prone to crashes, but as with other goods, the "China price" is proving irresistible for governments around the world.[87] Yabin Liang is correct to note the comparative ease of manufacturing drones over nuclear weapons, as they require only a developed industrial base to produce, in no way dependent on access to uranium, plutonium, and other "special materials."

Were a global combat drone regime to form, there is reason to expect China to meet stipulated restrictions, though not to the higher standards demanded by the U.S.[88] Yabin Liang's editorial notes fears that drone proliferation could upset the balance of great powers and threaten the collapse of nuclear arms reduction treaties. This is the closest Chinese statement the study has found to suggest that not every state is equally entitled to possession of CUAVs, and perhaps a regime of the kind Buchanan & Keohane propose would stir the PRC's interest, if it could successfully rein in the U.S. In the absence of international laws on drone proliferation, we can still have moral doubts about uninhibited sales of combat drones. The PRC's wholesale rejection of conditional sovereignty leads it to support states' regimes regardless of their conduct, even in the extreme case of aiding Sudan during alleged genocide in Darfur.[89] Unlike the U.S. and its restricted list of countries deemed responsible enough to purchase American combat drones, therefore, China is positioned to take full advantage of the growing global demand for drones.[90]

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[87] Why states want drones at all is a topic well covered in a working paper by Horowitz & Fuhrmann. They theorize that states use them to enhance traditional security, build and project prestige for having high-tech capabilities, democracies are shifting their militaries to be more capital-intensive (rather than human-intensive forces such as standing armies), and the simple, "supply side" explanation that those states which can build or purchase drones, do so.

[88] Although preceding the drone issue, Frieman is optimistic about Chinese compliance. See Kan for the assessment of China basically in compliance with international non-proliferation but not satisfying the U.S. In an article focused on export control treaties focused on the EU, Zhao, pg. 7, states that "China seems willing in its official statements to play its role as a 'global responsible power' in contributing to peace and stability in the region and the world at large." Bitzinger is less optimistic, as are China hawks in general.

[89] In 2009 I investigated the online edition of China's Global Times (环球时报 Huanqiu Shibao)for coverage of Darfur and found glowing reports of China's role in helping Sudan develop, unlike critical, Western NGO's. The g-word is carefully debunked, downplayed, or most preferably, avoided altogether. Duchatel, Brauner, and Zhou's article is a lot more thorough on China's interests in Africa and investments elsewhere. Chung and Rozman's books are again useful to show that no regime, especially a neighbor under sanction from the West, is too unsavory to deserve developmental aid.

[90] See Wann & Finn.

The CCP's support of states is again a crucial distinction, however, as many potential customers are currently engaged in intra-state conflicts such as insurgencies and civil wars. A strong pro-state bias should be enough to keep Chinese drones out of the hands of non-state actors considered to be terrorists, though there are no known restrictions on individual Chinese manufacturers. Should an officially recognized regime in possession of Chinese combat drones collapse, it is easy to imagine the arsenal being taken as the spoils of war, not unlike any other weapon. An article translated into Chinese from a Defense Review based in Canada mentions drone cooperation operations with Egypt and South Africa, confirmed sales to the UAE, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, while Algeria has also expressed interest in purchasing one of the armed models, designated with a "G" after its name.[91] Other authors online have expressed many concerns about China's role in drone proliferation, but not at length in an academic journal.[92]

Ultimate responsibility for creating a worldwide institution regulating drone sales rests with the most powerful state or states. Boussios is among the most vocal in calling for the Obama administration to take advantage of the "opportunity, and some would say obligation, to create a doctrine that sets guidelines for the development and deployment" of UAVs, but as even commitments to restricting the U.S.'s own sales are being debated, it is unlikely that the U.S. will push for China or Israel, to bind exports to liberal norms of states exhibiting exemplary R2P. To conclude, existing international law likely applies to drones, however imprecisely, but other than the self-imposed restrictions on U.S. sales, proliferation of combat UAVs remains even less regulated than their use.

Unrestricted sales of Chinese drones, provided their price and performance continue to be attractive, may discourage other states from pursuing their own development or, in the case of Pakistan, spur it with opportunities for reverse-engineering. If the anti-drone laser China developed in Nov. 2014 and sold to Pakistan proliferates beyond the PRC's limited allies, states which do not approve of strikes over

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[91] http://mil.huanqiu.com/observation/2014-12/5321476.html. *"Zhongguo Wurenji Dou Mai Dao Na? Jiyou Tiegan Mengyou You You Zhongdong Youba".* (Where Is China Selling Its Drones? Both to Loyal Allies and Middle-East Oil Tyrants) Dec. 31, 2014.

[92] For examples, see Bodeen, Schaefer, Sorcher, Wann & Finn.

their territories may yet prevail.[93] Were the targets of U.S. drone strikes to obtain the laser, either a reduction of strikes or an improvement in drone artificial intelligence, evasiveness, or defense would be likely. So far, China hasn't been so confrontational or generous with its laser, but in recent maritime disputes, China is said to counter the Global Hawk with jamming techniques, a tactic which could more easily be replicated.[94] No examples of the anti-drone laser's use outside of Chinese military reports has been unearthed, but if this and other drone neutralization technologies counter-proliferate, a game of cat-and-mouse might reduce the price advantages and operations for which UAVs improve upon conventional manned aircraft. Excepting this possibility, drone skeptics like Joshi & Stein, Gilli & Gilli, may find their arguments increasingly undermined by the PRC as an unrestricted global exporter.

Conclusions. Critics have claimed to debunk Power Transition Theory on numerous occasions, but its logic is resilient and evocative in our collective, hegemonic memories and imaginations. The "China Threat" narrative rekindles and now surpasses U.S. fears of rising Japan in the 1980s, and perhaps a penchant for robotics links this study to the previous alleged challenger. Layne's titular assertion that "this time it's real" could be illustrated by China's global leadership in the consumer drone industry, but companies like DJI so far portend no more than the occasional intrusion upon the Japanese Prime Minister's house or the White House lawn. Proliferation of armed drones could reverse this prediction, especially if the present study has accurately framed China as a *most likely* case for their expanded use.

The crucial case framework cannot claim to have falsified both the "China Threat" or "Drone Revolution" theses, as both are conglomerates of multiple theories and observations which are far from systematic. Nonetheless, extreme context-independent and consequential claims like these deserve to be weakened. The preceding sections also offer several suggestions for how they might be modified to reflect realities which take more than material power factors into account.

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[93] Ishaan Tharoor, "China Unveils a New Anti-Drone Laser, But It's the Growing Chinese Drone Fleet that Matters," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 6, 2014. Pakistan's *Business Recorder* follows Pakistan's drone development and weapons trade with China closely, including details of the laser's sale.

[94] Bill Getz, May 22, 2015: http://freebeacon.com/national-security/chinese-military-using-jamming-against-u-s-drones/

The crude form of Power Transition Theory expects all rising powers to behave roughly the same, challenging and overthrowing the declining hegemon when its own power permits, as in Schweller & Pu's "spoiler" scenario. Even one lacking the credulity to internalize "Peaceful Development" or the spotlight shunning of the non-insidious translations of Deng's *taoguang yanghui*, however, must leave room for agency, institutions, international law, and all the other factors excluded by a focus on sheer military and economic power.[95] Yet if taking into account the rationality of states via their leaders, how realism minimally incorporates agency and contingencies into its analysis, using UAVs for all sorts of objectives would be highly rational for all of the system's "unitary actors." As a cutting-edge weapon technology, use of unmanned systems would allow China to balance against the U.S., project power beyond its borders, and through repeated practice gain proficiency in weapons which could prove helpful or crucial in the event of a major war. Where Kenneth Waltz saw the possession of nuclear weapons making previously erratic states more responsible—as use in a "first strike" would be highly irrational and lead only to mutually assured destruction—the "Drone Revolution" might corrupt even otherwise responsible states to play fast and loose with tools of surgical coercion.

Rather than even the "soft balancing" which neorealists claim to observe in the post-Cold War world of undisputed U.S. hegemony, however, China appears to be following the strategy described by Schweller & Pu, supplemented by Finnemore, of criticizing the hegemon. In doing so, China seeks to tarnish the moral authority of the U.S., whose self-image is one of exemplary defense and promotion of liberal values. Criticism of the predominant world power, in turn, may diminish the legitimacy of the liberal world order which the U.S., in tandem with Western powers, has created and sustained.

If the PRC is simply being contrarian, opposing the U.S. and the "liberal order" and all its interests in a zero-sum game, the drone regulation regime Buchanan & Keohane call for could paradoxically cause

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[95] This study takes PTT to be far less than deterministic or even probabilistic; its predictions should be kept in mind precisely to prevent it from becoming a self-fulfilling prophesy in the manner of Thucydides Trap.

China to reverse its restraint. This study has suggested that while Buchanan & Keohane explicitly name China as needing to be excluded from the regime for being unlikely to comply,[96] the main problem is quite squarely focused on limiting U.S. drone strikes. Even in the face of comparable terrorist threats, the PRC has demanded adherence to international law and could be expected to abide by a global regulatory regime on CUAV usage[97], though restricting Chinese sales would not be easy.

Claims that a hegemonic, liberalizing force akin to Niall Ferguson's "Colossus" can or must democratize China to prevent human rights atrocities ring hollow in the realm of combat drones. By Sørensen's account, such impositions themselves are a threat to the liberal world order, but restraint is no more palatable an option when faced with a rising, anti-liberal power such as the PRC. The restraint this study has lauded in China may be no more than a strategy of saving its CUAV arsenal for state-to-state warfare rather than the U.S. tactic against non-state actors. Alternative arguments are more hopeful and, one hopes, persuasive. The PRC already faces intense scrutiny from the liberal West for its human rights record and does not wish to draw further opprobrium (or sacrifice its peaceful rhetoric and the moral high ground) in pursuit of a questionably effective counter-terror tactic.

From a human rights perspective, if we need to direct our worries about drones somewhere new, North Korea and other rogue regimes are obvious targets, but this is no reason to reduce vigilance toward the PRC. If Chinese drone strikes begin tomorrow, we may consider this study's argument falsified, but an era of actual interstate drone warfare is nowhere to build a global community. Aggressive use of Chinese combat drones would be a dead canary in the coalmine indicating that the PRC has traded membership in that community for a realist yet utopian crusade to "harmonize" the world by force. This is an option that a democratic but highly nationalistic China could yet select in the future. We should be grateful for every day that cooler heads prevail.

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[96] Buchanan & Keohane, pg. 34, find China, Russia, and Israel to be skeptical and "unlikely candidates" to join their proposed "Drone Accountability Regime." Theirs and other drone studies which exclude China will be increasingly viewed as incomplete.
[97] See Frieman, Kan, Paraschiv, and Jizhou Zhao.

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