DOES THIS DRONE MATCH MY OUTFIT?

CHALLENGES TO UNITED STATES SELF-IDENTITY IN THE AGE OF AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS

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Abstract

In the age of ever bigger dominance of the robotics over the realm of human activities, one of the most problematic aspects of it is visible in warfare. In order to keep it humane and in the line with the law of war, politics, civil society and academia participate in the debate which delineates the limits and conditions of the use of autonomous weapon systems (AWS). United States' army is one of the most active when it comes to usage of autonomous weapons, still manned by distant operators. US often uses it in counterterrorist endeavors, but criticisms and debates over the legality and the morality of the use do not stop. As the US is a country which claims to hold itself to the highest standards of lawfulness and morality, this research aims to look at how use of autonomous weapons has been accommodated into this narrative and whether autonomous weapons are a threat to the US vision of the Self. This will be done through the lens of ontological security theory, while employing the literature on military ethics and AWS. Preliminary, thesis shows that the AWS narrative is well accommodated into the US narrative of the Self, but it also show that it is challenged from the aspect of evolution of military ethics under AWS.

Keywords: United States, ontological security, autonomous weapons, military ethics

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Introduction

How do the soldiers sleep at night knowing they killed someone in the battle that day? The question of whether you can sleep at night is less about whether the outside world approves your actions and more about whether you approve them yourself. There must be something more to Depeche Mode lyrics than where I aim at, but how many times have the circumstances shattered our idea of ourselves and made us redefine what or who we are? How many different versions of stories do we tell ourselves about ourselves, to justify our actions? These are very subjective and secretive processes of individuals, but the workings of social science have made it possible to redefine our question, take it to the next level and ask – how do states "sleep" at night knowing some troubling things are being done in their name?

In this process of fighting morally induced sleep deprivation, many actions have been rationalized, even to the point of developing and using highly detrimental weapons of mass destruction. The desire to be strongest and hold the most chips most certainly has not vanished from international politics, but the desire for having moral high ground balances that out. This is a story about that.

The development of human rights and international humanitarian law, topped with the explosion in civil activism, participated in the efforts to humanize war and to make the violence

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[1] Gore, "It's Only When I Lose Myself", recorded by Depeche Mode

as bearable and as controlled as possible. Even before insisting on crude international rules of war, there had always existed a call to virtue, which is deemed to soften and nurture moderate, dispassionate behavior in combat. In the international arena, states began to strive for the superior position of those who abide by the rules and embody the utmost virtue in war. As states fight for their survival, they also fight for preservation of their authentic stories about themselves, needed to presume the superior moral and legal position. When states have troubles sleeping, says the ontological security theory, they must have in some way departed from their preconceived image about themselves. This is most frequently seen in the case of violations of the international law, but something different happens in war every now and then.

As the technology progresses, so do our possibilities of performing different tasks. As bureaucratic as it sounds, the task of the military which was enriched by technology with many modes and possibilities was killing. The desire to regulate and control it never ceases to exist, but sometimes our existing rules are not enough. There is a long stream of thinking in the international relations theory, which contends that robotics and autonomous weapon systems (AWS) are one of those paradigm-changing scientific breakthroughs. One of the most troubling aspects of this, for the theory, is the moral aspect of their employment in battle. From the virtue-less war and detachment from victims, to the PlayStation mentality and push-button wars, there is a large body of critique and opposition to the AWS. Still, many states use them, but we do not know much about the fate of their self-consciousness and their sleeping habits. One of them is the United States and this story is about their story.

Therefore, with consideration to the literature dealing with the use of AWS and ethics, with a focus on military virtue, I will set out to explore the relationship between the US self and their use of autonomous weapons in warfare. I will do so through the lens of the ontological

security theory, looking at the discursively shaped state narratives and the possible discrepancies and challenges coming from the moral critique of AWS.

The discussion part will thus portray the story about the US biographical narrative, as well as the story which serves to justify the use of autonomous weapons in warfare. Hence, my argument laid out in the discussion will be twofold; first, I will argue that the US rhetoric about drones is framed in such a way to successfully sustain the basis of its self-identity; second, I will argue that the bigger challenge for US Self comes from the evolution of military virtue under the growing use of the AWS.

A precondition for this discussion to be comprehensible is to define and explain terms that will be frequently used further in the text. When we talk about autonomous weapon systems (AWS), we refer to all the weapons which operate with some or without human involvement, when deployed on the battlefield. When we talk about unmanned aerial vehicles (UAWs), remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs) and remotely piloted aircrafts (RPAs), we refer to weapons currently in use, which are operated by human soldiers from a distance. The autonomous weapon systems which we talk about are offensive and lethal so, in the most cases, the debate is about drones because they are the most "popular" choice in the US military. This is all a part of the newest Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), by which we mean the past 30 years, when the development and use of such weapons soared and altogether changed the way we wage war and the way we talk about it. I will leave the terms within the ontological security theory to be explained further on, in the theoretical section. What is important to note that we are not talking about public opinion here, but about the narratives and the framing from those that represent the state and its institutions. Biographical narrative, the narrative of the self and the self-narrative are used as synonyms.

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In the beginning, I will give a brief introduction into what is known as the latest revolution in military affairs, concerning automation and robotics. I will explore the state-of-the-art literature concerning autonomous weapon systems, with a highlight on ethical debates surrounding them. In the second chapter, I will lay out the theoretical framework of my discussion, which I situate in the ontological security theory. I will also briefly explain the methodology and the aims of the research. Third chapter will be dedicated to the discussion and it will be divided into three parts. In the first part, I will talk about the main motives in the US narrative of the Self and its manifestations. In the second part, I will delineate the narrative about unmanned aerial vehicles that the US uses in combat and argue that they help sustain the US narrative of the self. Lastly, I will address the issue of the evolution of military virtue under the expansion of AWS, possible challenges it poses to the US narrative of the self and a brief discussion about the fully automated future weapons and their impact on the situation.

Having all of this in mind, I would go ahead and start the elaboration by the mentioned order.

1 (Don't fear) the Robot

One of the most famous images in the history of warfare is undoubtedly the image of a Royal Air Force plane dropping several blockbuster bombs over the Duisburg sky, Germany, WWII. The Allies engaged in a few months of strategic bombing of the Ruhr area, aiming for the industrial capacities of Nazi Germany. It is estimated that about 400,000 civilians lost their lives due to the Allied bombing of Germany.[2] This is to say that, although civilians are not the target or the war aim, those few hundred thousand of them made up significant collateral damage of the strategic targeting. Nowadays, if we talk about civilian casualties of bombing campaigns, numbers are expressed in dozens to hundreds, in exceptional cases. What has changed in the meantime?

1.1 Gulf War and the Revolution in Military Affairs

With the development of combat airplanes, airstrikes became common in warfare, but they went a long way until they were able to impeccably target certain people or places. This was the result of technological advancements in weaponry and aiding technologies, such as GPS, infrared and lasers, which served to search and map the area, and later guide missiles to their respective targets. Even though precision-guided munitions are sometimes mentioned as early as in the 70s and the Vietnam war, most of the authors in academia and in war journalism take the First Gulf War as the war bringing the new revolution in military affairs[3], being waged mostly by those so-called "smart bombs".

[2] "'Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe 1940-1945.'"

[3] Chapman, "An Introduction to the Revolution in Military Affairs"; Cordesman, "The Real Revolution in Military Affairs"; Maloney and Robertson, "The Revolution in Military Affairs"; Ibrügger, "The Revolution in Military Affairs, Special Report"; Nolte, "Keeping Pace with the Revolution in Military Affairs."

In the Gulf War, as Richard P. Hallion states, they "dominated the battlefield" in the sense that they incurred about 75% of all the damage done to Iraqi forces.[4] This can be misleading, since only 9% of all the missiles were precision weapons, and about 4% of them were laser-guided weapons. Another milestone is the 1999 NATO military intervention in Kosovo, where the coalition used GPS guided missiles in large amounts. Still, that operation was largely affected by the fog of war, the high altitudes of the planes and false targets that prevented precise bombing.[5] In 2003, a new war broke out in Iraq, and there was again the optimism of the First Gulf War and the abilities of the army to do a clean job and spare as many civilians as possible.[6] As Marouf Hasian points out, the important point is that unmanned vehicles stopped being only the support to guided munitions in a matter of decade, but became weapons themselves[7], which led to completely new conditions and the redefinition of the battlefield.[8]

All of these and a lot of other conflicts gave wings to the sophistication of technologies used to accurately find and attack targets. On the brink of the new century, an explosion of a brand-new branch of technologies had happened. According to Metz and Kievit, the current revolution in military affairs is developing in two stages; the first one relates to drive to limit military casualties, stand-off platforms, stealth, precision, information dominance, and missile defense, while the second one is related to robotics, nonlethality, pyschotechnology, and elaborate cyberdefense.[9] We are going to talk about the robotics and what thez brought to the revolution in technology in toto and in military affairs.

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[4] Hallion, "Precision Guided Munitions and the New Era of Warfare."
[5] Barndollar, "The Kosovo War at 20."
[6] Sample, "US Gambles on a 'smart' War in Iraq."
[7] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*.
[8] Hasian, 33.
[9] Metz and Kievit, "STRATEGY AND THE REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS: FROM THEORY TO POLICY."

The real revolution here was success in making it possible for machines to do things humans cannot even imagine doing. These "children" of technology surpassed the potentials of their makers, but not always for a good cause. Although technology is a product of humanity and its aide, there is an inherent clash between the practices of humans and the ways robotics and automation challenge them and change them irreversibly.

1.2   Robots in Warfare

The first and clearest objection of all is taking people out of performing certain tasks in the production and distribution of products and services. As machines came along, they reduced the necessity for so many workers doing manual jobs because of their increased efficiency, while also being able to do a multitude of differentiated tasks once performed by different people with different skillsets.

As machines are becoming more skilled than people, they are also becoming more independent and are given more responsible tasks which are surpassing the innocence of industrial production of goods. Instead, they simultaneously became very important in the industry as well as in the domain of security and protection, and consequently, in warfare. The notion of including automation in warfare is not new, but it has evolved and experienced a recent shift. In his book Army of None, Paul Scharre looks at the automation of weapons. Starting from the Gatling gun which was able to "deliver the same lethal firepower as more than a hundred men"[10], he walks us through machine guns and smart munitions and ultimately gets to the latest advancements of the weapons industry. His task is to trace one trait of robotics which currently

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[10] Scharre, *Army of None*, 27.

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poses the biggest challenge, autonomy, as it has a somewhat different reading. Scharre offers a classification between semi-autonomous weapons, supervised autonomous weapons and fully autonomous weapons.[11] He distinguishes them on a simple basis: are the humans in control of their actions when they are on the battlefield. In the case of full autonomy, humans are out of the loop i.e. the weapon operates and makes decisions on its own i.e. according to its programming. Some authors such as Marco Sassoli do not find this distinction helpful for the understanding of the autonomy of weapon, as he finds that "human beings will inevitably be involved, either in overseeing the operation of the weapon, or at least in producing and programming the weapon systems"[12]. Scharre's classification is still relevant since it gives us the idea about who is in charge from the point weapons engage in the conflict. In terms of programming, "these weapons can search for, decide to engage, and engage targets on their own and no human can intervene."[13]. Complete autonomy of weapons is still in development, but something that approximates the idea of autonomy is the Israeli Harpy drone.[14] Manned from a distance or unmanned, such weapons pose great issues. Hence, there is a growing need to investigate and regulate the usage of semi or fully autonomous weapons, keeping it in line with legal and ethical standards of warfare. Questions concerning international law and ethical issues are the two biggest and the most identifiable strands in the debate about autonomous weapon systems.

First and foremost, the debate turns to formal requirements autonomous weapons must meet in order to be considered legitimate weapons of choice in contemporary warfare. This

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[11] Scharre, 34–36.
[12] Sassoli, "Autonomous Weapons and International Humanitarian Law: Advantages, Open Technical Questions and Legal Issues to Be Clarified," 309.
[13] Scharre, *Army of None*, 36.
[14] Scharre, 37–38.

means they would have to be designed and employed in accordance with international humanitarian law. Opinions differ on **whether autonomous weapons can abide by the international law,** thus the side which believes they can debate on the conditions in which this can be managed. Sassoli's work entertains the possibility that robots may be more humane than humans in warfare, because they cannot commit crimes motivated by passion and emotions.

> *"A robot cannot hate, cannot fear, cannot be hungry or tired and has no survival instinct."*[15]

This is probably one of the strongest arguments in the general debate on whether robots are capable of abiding by the law and whether humans are the only ones able to fight justly.

1.2.1   Distinction

If we delve into the particularities of the humanitarian law and just war theory, there are a few principles that are the most important when it comes to weapons' behavior and are situated within the *jus in bello* doctrine. One of the most problematic principles is certainly the **principle of distinction**, where the clash is about how capable robots are to distinguish combatants and non-combatants. Distinguishing capabilities are mostly dependent on the quality of their programming and their skillset. This is a significant point of the debate since, as it is mentioned, there had always been an effort to increase the precision of targeting and save civilian lives. Asaro extends the claim of robots being potentially more moral than humans onto the distinction principle and concludes that there is a moral obligation to develop such weapons if they are proven to be able to avoid targeting civilians more efficiently than human soldiers.[16] Cass, however, argues that facial recognition is useless however precise, because "lack of a precise

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[15] Sassoli, "Autonomous Weapons and International Humanitarian Law: Advantages, Open Technical Questions and Legal Issues to Be Clarified," 310.
[16] Asaro, "How Just Could a Robot War Be?," 12.

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definition for the term "civilian" further complicates the matter"[17]. Further on, even if there is a definition of a legitimate target, Leveringhaus argues "a child with a toy gun", could deceive robot into thinking it is not a civilian[18]. Same is put forward by Sharkey, who argues for necessary human judgement, since machines cannot take into account the context of the situation needed to make the right decision[19].

1.2.2   Proportionality

The other important principle is the **principle of proportionality** and the need to make sure that autonomous weapons would be able to refrain themselves from excessively harming the civilians. Some of the authors are skeptical towards this idea altogether, like Sharkey again: "There is no sensing or computational capability that would allow a robot such a determination [of proportionality], and nor is there any known metric to objectively measure needless, superfluous or disproportionate suffering. They require human judgment''[20]. The apparent basis of both his arguments is that morality of humans is indispensable and it is often the last instance indecision making process that nuances the strict rules of conduct. There are several dilemmas and questions that go through the filter of morality in a soldier's head before he pulls the trigger or presses a button. On the other side, robots are not capable of such a sophisticated assessment of the situation, thus they judge only by formal, pre-programmed rules. Leveringhaus further argues that proportionality is contextual, so pre-programmed robot cannot adapt to changing relations of proportionality.[21] Most of this debate relates to the possibilities of robots to assess the danger the adversary poses and the importance of the military aim. However, we are far from having these traits programmed into weapons not operated by humans.

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[17] Cass, "Autonomous Weapons and Accountability: Seeking Solutions in the Law of War."
[18] Leveringhaus, *Ethics and Autonomous Weapons*, 54.
[19] Sharkey, "Saying 'No!' To Lethal Autonomous Targeting," 379.
[20] Sharkey, "Grounds for Discrimination: Autonomous Robot Weapons," 88.
[21] Leveringhaus, *Ethics and Autonomous Weapons*, 55.

1.2.3 Accountability

If something like this does happen, then the question is who to blame and that is the next issue with autonomous weapons – **accountability**. Since they are put in use independently on the battlefield, a large debate surrounds the issue of who do we bring to justice if a machine fails. Since robots do not have a consciousness or a legal subjectivity on their own, they cannot be brought to justice. Hence, there are a few options that are repeatedly appearing in the literature in different settings. According to extensive literature debating on the topic, we can either blame the manufacturer/programmer or someone in the chain of command for the misuse of the weapon. Rebecca Crootof offers special tort law[22], where she contends that "state responsibility may operate as a more effective deterrent to overuse than individual liability"[23], since they are the key actor in the integration and employment of autonomous weapons. Charles Dunlap rejects accountability without the clear intention to do harm[24] where he argues that it is not about technology but about "strict adherence to the law of war as to its use"[25]. Thus, "a commander must have a reasonable understanding of the AWS and how it will work before deploying it in a particular situation"[26] and if we make sure that is satisfied, then we can hold someone liable for misuse. Kelly Cass also enforces this and limits the accountability only to agents trained[27] and informed about the workings of a weapon[28]. In the end, Sparrow puts this quite simply, arguing that the greater the autonomy of the weapon, the lesser the responsibility of the humans involved in its manufacturing and deploying.[29]

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[22] Crootof, "War Torts: Accountability for Autonomous Weapons."
[23] Crootof, 1390.
[24] Dunlap Jr., "Accountability and Autonomous Weapons: Much Ado About Nothing?"
[25] Dunlap Jr., 75.
[26] Dunlap Jr., 69.
[27] Cass, "Autonomous Weapons and Accountability: Seeking Solutions in the Law of War," 1053.
[28] Cass, 1062.
[29] Sparrow, "Killer Robots," 65–66.

Some of the solutions are focused on the output of the situation of moral uncertainty or the strict rules, but the underlying issue to be solved is the implementation of a kind of morality in the conduct of those operating the weapons which would compensate for the lack of moral judgment in autonomous weapons. A lot of scholarship looks at the autonomous weapons as the end to ethical and just warfare, but not only that; as the morality of war is dying out with inhumane robots, so is the virtue of human soldiers who become just the operators of machines. The problem shifts from autonomous weapons being stripped of morality per se to their impact on the behavior of the human military and their attitude towards killing, civilians, risk, etc.

1.2.4   Virtue, morality and weapons

"War is not war anymore"[30], states theatrically Laurie Calhoun in her elaboration on the end of military virtue. However, she correctly notes the problems of so-called "desktop warriors"[31] who operate remote weapons. They are **detached from the battlefield and from their victims**, which, in her opinion, creates a somewhat sociopathic relationship with death and killing, which becomes banal as playing a video game.[32] In line with that, they are secure from risking their lives when dealing with the adversary, which further triggers irresponsible behavior because of the lack of repercussions for the soldier.[33] In line with this argument goes Srđan Korać's "Depersonalisation of Killing"[34] where he argues that autonomous weapons will

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[30] Calhoun, "The End of Military Virtue," 377.
[31] Calhoun, 379.
[32] Calhoun, 382.
[33] Calhoun, 382.
[34] Korac, "Depersonalisation of Killing."

completely erase ethical reasoning from warfare, depersonalizing the enemy and the combat through the lens of "realm of technological precision".[35]

At this point, there is a wide scholarship on the topic, most of which agrees that an issue of morals exists[36].

In Bradley Jay Strawser's "Killing by Remote Control: The Ethics of an Unmanned Military"[37] there is a strong focus and a variety of authors debating on the ethical aspect of the employment of unmanned weapons. One of them is Robert Sparrow's "War without Virtue?" whose hypothesis advances the argument that the employment of remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs) changes the nature of military virtue in the ones who employ it. He problematizes few conventional military virtues, but his main points are that operators of RPVs "have no need (and have no opportunity to demonstrate) for physical courage"[38] because their bodies are not at risk of being harmed.

Shannon Vallor addresses differences between military action and military service, the effect of autonomous weapons on the cultivation military virtue and the prospects of virtuous motivation in warfare. She notes that maintaining military virtues is crucial for keeping people morally accountable for their actions in warfare.[39] The other aspect of it is taking the **risk**, where she concludes self-sacrifice is par excellence expression of military service and ethical conduct in warfare.[40] Thus, semi-autonomous and autonomous weapons undermine this function of warfare. Further on, and what is particularly important for the continuation of this analysis, is

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[35] Korac, 62.
[36] Schulzke, "Rethinking Military Virtue Ethics in an Age of Unmanned Weapons"; Vallor, "Armed Robots and Military Virtue"; Kirkpatrick, "Drones and the Martial Virtue Courage"; Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, chap. 2.
[37] Strawser, *Killing by Remote Control*.
[38] Sparrow, "War without Virtue?," 96.
[39] Vallor, "Armed Robots and Military Virtue," 170.
[40] Vallor, 174.

that nurturing and practicing military virtue in combat serves also to differentiate military service which is being performed on some higher basis than just routine or strategic action.[41] This puts an emphasis on exactly how we use the weapons or how we engage in warfare, putting aside the practical benefits of their usage. Connected to this is her concern about the public perception of soldiers and their **"ethical Self"** which could delegitimize military action and undermine military morale.[42] This is a particularly important point from which I would like to start and address it the next part of the analysis.

At this point, I would like to get back to the nature of ethics insisted on in the military conduct and refer firstly to Marcus Shulzke's piece on rethinking virtue in the military. While he acknowledges there is a significantly reduced risk for the ones employing unmanned weapons, he reminds of how important it is for the weapons to be operated by moral soldiers.[43] Thus, he examines Aristotelian virtue ethics, which are the predominant model in the military, and tries to make a case that this model is not enough to satisfy and give incentive to moral behavior in soldiers.[44] Instead, he argues for a deontological approach which is based on stricter rules and does not allow that much of personal interpretation of rules. Not only that, he tackles the problem of accountability claiming that stricter rules make it easier to evaluate soldier's conduct.[45]

Despite this, Mark Jensen makes the case for Aristotelian ethics.[46] Namely, in his opinion, the moral character of soldiers is of utmost importance because they are participating in something bigger than their actions on the battlefield.[47] They are playing a certain social role

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[41] Vallor, 175.
[42] Vallor, 184.
[43] Schulzke, "Rethinking Military Virtue Ethics in an Age of Unmanned Weapons," 188.
[44] Schulzke, 188.
[45] Schulzke, 199.
[46] Jensen, "Epictetus vs. Aristotle."
[47] Jensen, 105.

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which constitutes a certain part of the society and its identity.[48] It is focused on a certain idea of the common good[49], thus builds on mentioned Vallor's argument of differentiating military service based on its motivations.

All these arguments and analyses mainly refer to how usage of weapons influences the behavior of combatants, their relationship to killing and the repercussions of potential changes in ethics and legislation. They examine the way we can trace the decision-making process and responsibility in the employment of autonomous weapon systems. Nevertheless, the way the army fights and who fights, men or machines, fits into a bigger picture, both ethics-wise and security-wise. What is missing here is the aspect that is looking at how the usage of certain weapons influences the ethical landscape of the whole community.

When it comes to ethics in conventional warfare, military ethics is generally not self-induced. It is a part of the value set of the entity for which it fights, and thus is expected to embody those values. Following this line of argumentation, the way war is waged, and by which means should derive from the internalization of those values in the military. If this holds, I would like to look at what the weapons which do not express any value or virtue themselves do for the upholding the ideals of the whole community, not just the army. To examine the relationship between the army and its weapons, on the one side, and the state and its values, on the other side, I will turn to the framework provided by the theory of ontological security. I find this approach useful since it will reveal the discursive relationship actors have with these weapons, whether there is a tension between weapons and their identity and how they accommodate the new practice to old narratives.

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[48] Jensen, 104.
[49] Jensen, 106.

Thus, in the next chapter, I would like to outline the basics of the ontological security theory; I will look at how warfare using autonomous weapon systems interacts with the preservation of the character of the military as part of the state, and the state itself.

2 Theoretical Framework

Until now, the autonomous weapons debate remained mostly in the domain of warfare – we talk about the possibilities of the weapons, the lethality, the legality, justifiability, humanity, responsibility, etc. We also talk about it in terms of replacing or diminishing the role of humans, the manifestations and the repercussions of the process. When we debate all of that, the conversation and the arguments remain localized and focus mostly on what happens on the battlefield. However, if we take into consideration a wider aspect of the story, we intuitively know that warfare has its consequences far outside the realm of war.

> *"...Survival is the primary goal of great powers. Specifically, states seek to maintain their territorial integrity and the autonomy of their domestic political order. Survival dominates other motives because, once a state is conquered, it is unlikely to be in a position to pursue other aims."*[50]

This is classical realist aimed to explain what drives the behavior of states. As in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, according to realists, survival is the primary need of the states. Nevertheless, some authors challenge this view[51]. Brent Steele assumes that the states sometimes have a different motivation for their actions, which is more closely related to morals and ideals.[52] As he contends, the dichotomy between strategic rational and moral irrational actions does not hold[53], so he explains the rationality behind the moral motivation building on the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens.[54]

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[50] Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 31.
[51] Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*; Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics."
[52] Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*, 27–28.
[53] Steele, 28–29.
[54] Steele, 28–29.

2.1 Ontological security theory

Structuration theory holds that the relationship of the human agency and the social structures is a two-way street; human create social structure, but they are also influenced by it.[55] For the sake of this analysis, I will clarify two terms. The first is **signification** or producing meaning through webs of language, like discursive practices.[56] This means that the way we talk about things produces their meaning in the social reality. The other one is **legitimation** which "produces a moral order via naturalization of societal norms, values and standards"[57].

Steele takes Giddens's theory into the realm of international relations, explaining "that actors must create meanings for their actions to be logically consistent with their identities"[58]. These actors in Steele's interpretation are the states (as well as Mitzens's[59]), but there is a wide debate in IR where some authors oppose the adaptation of sociological and psychological framework onto states.[60] This analysis takes the state as the primary carrier of the identity and the ontological security, while acknowledging there may be parts of the state that do not resonate with the general narrative.

2.1.1 Narrative of the Self and the routine

Continuing, the referent point for actors' (states') actions is **biographical narrative** or the **narrative of the Self**.[61] Narrative of the Self is a story which explains the identity of the state and links it to the justifications of its actions. It serves to illustrate how a certain action is a

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[55] Lamsal, "The Structuration Approach of Anthony Giddens."
[56] Lamsal, 114.
[57] Lamsal, 114.
[58] Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*, 11.
[59] Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics."
[60] Roe, "The 'Value' of Positive Security," 785–86; Abulof, "'Small Peoples': The Existential Uncertainty of Ethnonational Communities," 233.
[61] Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*, 10.

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natural outcome of what they are, and that is their self-identity. For Mitzen, "a key part of society is its identity and distinctiveness *vis-a-vis* other societies"[62], thus she argues that states constitute identity through the relationship with other states. Although both approaches are relational, Steele focuses on the state's relation to itself and the reflexive processes of upholding the identity. This discussion will deal with a state's self-perception and internal challenges to the identity, so Steele's framework is adequate.

So, states are now oriented towards maintaining the Self and they take up actions to uphold it. For Steele, this is a process which may sometimes even endanger physical security of the state, but it is vital for maintaining predictability or the routine.[63] In terms of international relations, Steele refers to this as "routinized foreign policy actions"[64], which means that the biographical narrative creates a framework within which we can expect a certain institutionalized behavior of the state. This routinized behavior then should be consistent with state's assumed identity and the narrative about it. If this goal is not met, and the actions do not follow the narrative, it becomes a problem of ontological security.

States feel ontologically secure when they can assure the continuation of their narrative of the Self and their self-identity through certain actions which affirm their story about themselves. In Steele's words, "ontological security comes about when agents continue to choose actions which they feel reflect their sense of self-identity".[65] As survival is about physical security, ontological security is about maintaining who we are (or who we say we are).

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[62] Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics," 352.
[63] Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*, 51.
[64] Steele, 3.
[65] Steele, 52.

2.1.2 Insecurity and shame

Ontological insecurity, however, emerges when the routines are broken due to critical situations, which Steele defines as "identity threats" and "circumstances of radical disjuncture of an unpredictable kind which affect substantial numbers of individuals, situations that threaten or destroy the certitudes of institutionalized routines"[66]. This basically means that widespread circumstances which are not consistent with the existing institutionalized framework threaten the endurance of the identity. The outcome of this challenge to the identity is the feeling of anxiety and disruption of the relationship to the Self. As actors become aware of their detachment from their narrative, they turn to judging their own actions, thus producing the sense of shame, which deepens the insecurity.[67] This is the relational aspect in Steele's theory. Shame is internal, but also resonates with an audience, acting as a "moral community" which witnesses this discrepancy between narrative and the broken practice.[68] In this case, the audience can also hold the same identity, as it is in the case of the US administration and the US public. Process of shaming is supposed to end up at the introspection and rethinking of the narrative and practices.[69]

2.2 Military and state identity

How does this relate to the way military fights wars and the weapons it uses? If we accept the premises of ontological security theory, which says that states create a certain narrative about their self-identity, we accept that such narrative and its respective values have pretensions to influence and represent the whole community. One part of that community is the military; moreover, it is a vital institution for preserving physical security of the state.

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[66] Steele, 51.
[67] Steele, 53.
[68] Steele, 53.
[69] Steele, "'Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'," 255–56.

Military training, however, also aims to socialize soldiers into a certain mode of behavior, as it nurtures set of martial virtues. In addition to that, and what is important here, is the role of the military in the society which is the outcome of this socialization. As Jensen says, in his quest to find out which ethical framework is best for military virtue, "modern militaries are contributors to an enormous and complex social and political project"[70]. This means, in Steele's terminology, that the military with its socialized set of virtues participates in the final narrative about a community and follows it.

The identities of a state and the military are intertwined in many different observable ways. First, military is the organ of the state, it is socialized through the state system, thus it is expected to identify with the interests and goals of the state and fight for them. This is evident in day-to-day military trainings, but it is the most visible when it comes to actual conflicts within and outside the state. As it is elaborated on in Adam Hodges's work, states or representatives of the states (presidents) "manufacture the consent for war"[71], meaning they justify going to war by framing the situation. This is a short-term endeavor, but the more important function of it is the shaping of "imagined communities" or the national identity[72]. Hodges lays down five stages of the production of the war narrative[73], but we will focus on two of them. First is the identification of motives and objectives of a state, where the state sets core values for which it enters an armed conflict.[74] These values are to be upheld and represented by the army, as it is the representative of the state in the conflict. The other is identifying the enemy or situation Us versus Them.[75] This outlines the radically different characteristics than our adversaries', but it also presumes a moral

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[70] Jensen, p. 113.
[71] Hodges, "The Generic US Presidential War Narrative," 47.
[72] Hodges, 48.
[73] Hodges, 51–52.
[74] Hodges, 58.
[75] Hodges, 60–61.

quality over them, which is also a part of the identity which should be promoted on the battlefield by the soldiers and their conduct. In line with this, Brent Steele examines the interplay between honor in the US self-identity and its relation to the torture practices in the military.[76] He contends that there is a "deeper disciplinary process of the US self-identity"[77] which goes beyond individual agency. This complements to the argument that the state's narrative of the Self plays a big part in the socialization of certain values and behaviors in the military.

Apart from the *Jus ad Bellum* and *Jus in Bello* reasoning and identity building, the military is rewarded or punished for maintaining or endangering the identity of the whole community. "As the heroic (combat) soldier 'expands our own ego boundary ecstatically into that of the nation', warfare is therefore understood through the figure of the soldier. The 'legitimacy or otherwise' of war, and the overall political community, is thus affirmed or contested through the lens of this figure."[78] The typical soldier becomes the image of the nation and primary point of domestic and international identification. As Steele mentions, military virtues are being projected onto the domestic public by "public ceremonies and paying tribute to the soldiers during wartime"[79]. On the other hand, there were cases of soldiers being singled out as a shameful moment of departure from the state's identity, such as Abu Ghraib torture scandals, where the identity of the community had been denounced by referring to the wrongdoers as "a few bad apples"[80]. Steele gives an extensive analysis in his previously mentioned work on honor, where he identifies contradictory practices in the US – torture and interrogation, on the one hand, and protection of human rights and respect for the international law, on the other hand. He contends that both of these narratives uphold the US "ontological

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[76] Steele, "'Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'."
[77] Steele, 244.
[78] Millar and Tidy, "Combat as a Moving Target," 150.
[79] Steele, "'Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'," 250.
[80] Worthington, "Images That Exposed the Truth on Abuse."

visions of the self" and he looks at the way the public dimension of those practices puts a pressure on the state to react and clean its image.[81] This is an inspiration for the following discussion, in which I will talk about contradictory narratives and practices of the US in regard to the use of autonomous weapon systems.

With all of this in mind, I contend that the military is an important medium for expressing state's identity. The clearest point at which we can see how it expresses the self-identity of the state is through its primary function – warfare. The way the military fights signals the values contained in the state's self-identity, so this is where the autonomous weapon systems literature fits into place. As it is implied in the literature concerning the evolution of military virtue in the era of autonomous weapons, there are certain changes in the military virtue and virtuous behavior which can or cannot be in line with the national self-identity and the set of moral values.

2.3   Research design

Therefore, in the following chapter, I will take on Steele's ontological security theory and the analysis of the Self from a different perspective. From that point of view, I would like to address the relationship between the self-identity and the employment of autonomous weapon systems in the case of the United States. Based on the literature criticizing the use of autonomous weapons, my first presumption is that the US self-narrative is inconsistent with the UAVs practice, because of the possible violations of *Jus ad Bellum* and *Jus in Bello*. Since I laid out the literature concerning the debate about autonomous weapon system, my first goal in the discussion is to identify the US narrative of the Self from the existing literature. The basis of the

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[81] Steele, "'Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'," 243.

second part will be the research of Marouf Hasian[82]. He argues that the US frames the usage of UAVs in order to "immunize and protect" itself from the possible accusations of war crimes.[83]

My take on this will be twofold, through the theory of ontological security:

H1: *The use of UAVs is rhetorically framed in a way which upholds the US self-identity.*

I will argue that the US self-identity is challenged by the discrepancy between its narrative of the Self and the disputed use of UAVs in war. Still, the way the state officials frame the employment of UAVs serves to sustain not only immunity against prosecution, but it also serves to preserve the US self-identity.

H2: *The US self-narrative is challenged by the use of UAVs from the aspect of military virtue.*

I will argue here that there is the part of the US self-narrative which is not protected by the rhetorical framing of the UAVs. It concerns the tension between the usage of AWS and the development of military virtue. Thus, I will argue that development of military virtue under the UAVs could endanger the prospects of upholding the US self-identity.

For setting the US narrative of the self, my primary sources will be presidential inaugural addresses in the past 20 years. I will analyze speech acts and map out the main motives signaling

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[82] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*.
[83] Hasian, 128.

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the image of America. This analysis will be aided by the research of Adam Hodges, who did a discourse analysis of the US presidential war narratives[84].

I will approach H1 through the discourse analysis, using Marouf Hasian's research on the US framing of the drone warfare.[85] Besides that, I will analyze the production of discourse through addresses of the president Obama and the intelligence official and former CIA director, John Brennan, as proponents of the drone warfare in the name of the state.

For H2, I will take up the argumentative approach to address possible challenges to upholding of the US narrative, referring to scholarly literature on autonomous weapons and military ethics.

I find presidents' addresses relevant source for the whole analysis because of the double nature of their role in the state. First, president is a political leader of the nation and thus he is the key figure in creating the self-narrative and producing reality through it, which can be seen the best in the inaugural addresses which set the course of the nation. Second, he is the Commander in Chief of the military forces; hence he also plays an important role in justifying and framing conflicts, as well as in the production and upholding the values of the military. In some way, he mediates between the national Self in peace and the military Self in war. The focus of the UAVs rhetoric will be the Obama administration, since it was the time when the US drone fleet grew multiple times and started extensively using drones on the battlefield.

I chose the discourse analysis as it is inherent to interpreting the narratives and motives of the state. Although we cannot know with the utmost certainty the motivations and plans of the states, this is the closest scientific way to approach the intentions of the state. I find it suitable to

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[84] Hodges, "The Generic US Presidential War Narrative."
[85] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*.

deliver H1, as it is consistent with the methodology of the work I will rely on. When it comes to the H2, changes in the military virtue are hardly measurable, but this is primarily conceptual work, so I am relying on existing social mechanisms and theories developed in the broader literature on virtue, ethics and military.

The aim of this research is to contribute to the existing literature by taking up the interplay of autonomous weapons and military ethics from a different aspect. Most of the literature deals with the way autonomous weapons affect the ethics of individual soldiers or whole armies. Yet, my take on this will deal with how the change in military virtue due to the use of AWS affects a whole entity, such as state, and its identity and self-perception.

With all, I will proceed to the next chapter and lay out the main motives in the US narrative of the Self.

3 Discussion

3.1 US self-narrative

"We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense. And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken -- you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you."[1]

- First Inaugural Address of Barack Obama (2009)[86]

In the end of all epic tales and myths, the good always prevails. In the tales and myths of the nations, our nation prevails because it is on the side of the good and does well. It must be so, because we are good. Faced with great crises and temptations, our nation prevails because it is noble and courageous. This line of reasoning and the storyline can be applied to any given nation on Earth. Yet, each one of them claims exceptionality on its behalf.

Our, mine, yours – "imagined communities"[87] are based on the feeling of belonging to a group. The group is socially constructed and defined by a set of characteristics. What is ours cannot be someone else's, what is specific to us cannot be to someone else. Thus, we are exceptional. Implicitly mentioned through many speeches, addresses and statements, American version of exceptionalism is the corner stone of its narrative of the Self. Its exceptionalism is an individually studied topic which appears in its thinking, its values, its behavior, its politics, its culture, its mission etc.

*"America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are **bound by ideals** that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us **above our interests** and teach us what it means to be citizens."*

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[86] "President Barack Obama's First Inauguration Speech: Full Text."
[87] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

- First Inaugural Address of George W. Bush (2001)[88]

This excerpt from George W. Bush's first inauguration indicates that it makes sense that Steele calls the US "a special republic separated from other nation-states"[89]. What we can read from this part of the statement is that America is indeed a different state, but that its patriotism is also different. It is not of race or religion, but it is based on some consensual values which are understood to be universal to all the citizens (at least to some extent).

I will focus on the part of the US narrative forming the image of America in war and its reasoning of why, how and with whom the war is waged. This will incorporate the moral vision of America, its mission in the world, military ethics, pretexts for going to war, justifications of military operations, identification and framing of threats, as well as identification and characterization of enemies. I will do so with the help of, among other work, Adam Hodges's research on the US presidential war narratives.[90] Hodges gives a thorough discourse analysis of speeches given by American presidents before going to war, where they engage in several stages of building a compelling narrative, which will be discussed further on in the text. Some may remark that pre-war addresses probably carry a stronger emotional charge and do not always have to reflect the everyday perception of the self-identity. However, I maintain that this is a relevant source of the US self-identity and that presidential narrative "plays a pivotal role in defining American values and in constituting national consciousness of the imagined community"[91]. To make the argument more robust, I will take up a discourse analysis of the presidential inaugural speeches, as they give definition and affirmation of nation's identity and mission at their respective points in history.

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[88] "Inaugural Address of George W. Bush; January 20, 2001."
[89] Steele, "'Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'," 248.
[90] Hodges, "The Generic U.S. Presidential War Narrative: Justifying Military Force and Imagining the Nation."
[91] Hodges, 48.

Before delving into the discussion about the American narrative of the Self in war, I find that there is a need to address one issue mentioned by Olsthoorn[92]. When debating courage of the soldier, he sees it independently from the state's objectives, arguing "it is and it should be irrelevant to the professional soldier whether he fights to spread freedom and democracy, or for more base reasons"[93]. This means that, as long as a soldier is socialized into ethical behavior and is disciplined to make the right decisions, his motivations do not necessarily derive from motivations of the state. While it is true that soldiers do not have representative democracy or freedom of the press in mind while fighting, the real question is – why are they even there? Why do soldiers become soldiers and why do they go to war? Olsthoorn's claim holds entirely true if we talk about mercenaries, who have personal gain invested into their profession, or better, private military companies (PMCs) that provide professional contracted services of combat. Still, if we talk about national armies that are mostly voluntary, the motivation of engaging in military profession has some of its basis in politically defined higher causes or missions. More importantly, motivation for joining the army lays also in the loyalty to one's nation-state and one's identity. Therefore, I contend it is suitable to relate state's narrative about the war with its military ethics and behavior on the battlefield.

When analyzing the discursive pattern of justifying war, Hodges identifies five stages[94], out of which I identify two as the ones playing the role in constituting the Self – stating motives and objectives and identifying Us versus Them.

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[92] Olsthoorn, "Courage in the Military."
[93] Olsthoorn, 271.
[94] Hodges, "The Generic U.S. Presidential War Narrative: Justifying Military Force and Imagining the Nation," 51–52.

3.1.1 Motives and objectives

In this section, I will cross-reference the motives identified by Hodges and the motives dominating the inaugural addresses of the presidents. Most of the stories about the origins of the American set of values date back to the American Revolution, Founding Fathers and the Declaration of Independence of 1776. Much of the motives from the Declaration survived the test of time, but the most frequent two in presidents' war narratives are **"freedom"** and **"democracy"**. Although the rhetorical framing used by former president Bush in the earlier quote probably had the intention to enhance domestic cohesion, it also builds a certain **moral high ground** in comparison to other states, especially the ones who are in the middle of racial, religious or ethnic conflicts. Hence, from the moral high ground arises the moral motivation to spread the universal values Americans came to nurture as a nation. If we look at the inaugural addresses, we can find the same motives and the similar framing of America's role in international politics which stems from its internal values.

> *Through much of the last century, America's faith in **freedom and democracy** was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations.*

- First Inaugural Address of George W. Bush (2001)[95]

> *We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of **liberty** in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for **peace** in our world is the expansion of **freedom in all the world**.*

- Second Inaugural Address of George W. Bush (2005)[96]

The biggest task that the US has posed is spreading the values of freedom and democracy. This is another expression of the exceptionalism which it nurtures, since in the speeches presidents are not referring to international standards, but to the values deemed

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[95] "Inaugural Address of George W. Bush; January 20, 2001."
[96] "Second Inaugural Address of George W. Bush; January 20, 2005."

authentic for the US. In terms of ontological security, the US constitutes the identity by itself, thus reporting only to itself.[97] This constitutes a basis for the routine which can be only interrupted from the inside, by discrepancies between the constituted Self and the practice.

Furthermore, the narrative assumes the role of the US as a kind of Piedmont of the free world and the last stand under the strikes of authoritarianism[98], building the role of the protector of the people living under non-democratic, where "the expansion of freedom…was perceived as…even a burden"[99]. This also presumes the fight for **peace**, in the respective conflict areas, as the third notable discursive milestone of Hodges's research.[100] From Wilson to Clinton, America has been described as selfless, without ulterior motives and ambitions, except to uphold the ideals it harbors.[101] Portraying its incentives to fight a war serves to justify, but it also serves to project the moral landscape and the image of the nation onto the respective domestic audience.

> *"...To **save innocent lives** and **preserve peace**, **freedom** and stability in Europe."*

- Bill Clinton (1999), about NATO intervention in Yugoslavia[102]

> *"And that America must play its role in ushering in a **new era of peace**."*

- First Inaugural Address of Barack Obama (2009)[103]

This is to say that the US denounces conflicts, but the space is left for the discursive peacemaking to stretch outside the boundaries of peacekeeping missions and humanitarian help.

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[97] Steele, "'Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'," 255.
[98] "Rock in the raging sea", see citation above.
[99] Steele, "'Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'," 248.
[100] Hodges, "The Generic U.S. Presidential War Narrative: Justifying Military Force and Imagining the Nation," 58–59.
[101] See Hodges, 58.
[102] Hodges, 59.
[103] "President Barack Obama's First Inauguration Speech: Full Text."

> *This is not primarily the task of arms, though we will **defend ourselves** and our friends **by force of arms when necessary**.*

<div align="right">

\- Second Inaugural Address of George W. Bush[104]

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3.1.2 Identifying Us versus Them

Military necessity**,** preceded by the claim that there is no other way to take down the enemy[105], is one of the widely invoked arguments for engaging militarily into conflict zones. This is, again, preceded by characterization of the enemy as a force completely contrasted to us in a negative way. According to Hodges's scheme, **identifying Us versus Them** is the penultimate move in justification of engaging in conflict.[106] Framing America as the protagonist in a conflict serves not only for justification, but it serves to delineate and shed light on the characteristics of the America as a nation, of its people and its government. This is to remind the people of who America is when the threat is imminent; hence I believe it is a good point from which we can pick up the main points in the US narrative of the Self.

As Hodges notices, all the values America nurtures are put into "a cluster of other positive attributes"[107], where "invoking one characteristic of US implicates the others"[108] Thus, protecting freedom, democracy and peace also gives moral and legal authority to act.[109] Contrary to that are the ones who are autocratic, selfish and aggressive, hence, they have neither authority, nor legal or moral high ground for their actions. This is what makes a military involvement just and justified. This creates a clear dichotomy between us and them, between protectors and

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[104] "Second Inaugural Address of George W. Bush; January 20, 2005."
[105] Hodges, "The Generic U.S. Presidential War Narrative: Justifying Military Force and Imagining the Nation," 57.
[106] Hodges, 52.
[107] Hodges, 63.
[108] Hodges, 63.
[109] Hodges, 61.

aggressors, protagonists and antagonists. Yet, one stakeholder remains outside of this distinction – **the people**.

Creating the value division on negative and positive clusters, the narrative tends to associate cluster with an individual (ex. autocrat, terrorist leader, dictator)[110] "and thereby works to endow the enemy as a whole with intentional states embodied in the consciousness of the individual actor"[111], so "a subtle distinction is created between the government and the people"[112], This is in line with the role of the protector of universal values and it is also expressed through rhetorical befriending the people of the adversary state. It suits the image of selflessness and the service to the world peace.[113] In warfare this also implies "an exceptional obligation to human rights"[114] and protection of civilians from their government, important for our further discussion. This position is very well defined in this excerpt from GW Bush's second inauguration:

> *All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: The United States **will not ignore your oppression** or **excuse your oppressors**. When you stand for your liberty, **we will stand with you**.*

-   First Inaugural Address of George W. Bush (2001)[115]

Or Barack Obama's inaugural address:

> *We will **support democracy** from Asia to Africa, from the Americas to the Middle East, because our interests and our conscience compel us to **act on behalf of those who long for freedom**.*

-   Second Inaugural Address of Barack Obama (2013)[116]

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[110] Hodges, 61.
[111] Hodges, 61.
[112] Hodges, 61.
[113] Hodges, 59–60.
[114] Steele, "'Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'," 244.
[115] "Inaugural Address of George W. Bush; January 20, 2001."
[116] "Inaugural Address by President Barack Obama."

State narrative takes over the voice of the people against whom the war is waged and presumes the role in releasing them from their oppressive heads of governments. In the quest to save the innocents, it is presumed that the legal and moral high ground the US possesses imply respecting international humanitarian law.

To summarize, the narrative of the Self of the US is based on three primary values: freedom, democracy and peace. These are deemed universal values, and the US their protector. As values are a part of positive cluster, they also imply moral and legal authority, and they carry implicit adherence to the rule of law and laws of war.

3.2   AWS narrative – H1

"The United States government is fully committed to complying with its obligations under the law of armed conflict, minimizing, to the greatest extent possible, civilian casualties, and acknowledging responsibility when they unfortunately occur during military operations,"[117]

Earlier this year, 2019, current US president, Donald Trump, has revoked the obligation, introduced by Obama, to report civilian casualties of drone strikes outside of war zones, officials dismissing it as distracting professionals from doing their job.[118] Although this could spark some doubt about the number of civilian casualties and the legality of US drone operations abroad, government official reminds that the US complies with international law in its war activities.

Worldwide, there is a large initiative of NGOs, governments and international organizations to stop lethal autonomous weapon systems and put a moratorium on the development of the full autonomy.[119] Yet, the US and a few other states are not participating in

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[117] Holland and Mason, "U.S. Halts Reporting of Civilian Deaths by Drone Outside War Zones."
[118] Holland and Mason.
[119] "The Threat of Fully Autonomous Weapons."

that. Given the vivid debate surrounding the morality of the AWS, intuitively, the troubling reports about civilians losing their lives due to air bombing campaigns do not fall into the previously described narrative about America and its values, in warfare and in peace. The use of UAVs and the development of full autonomy are thus potential causes of rupture in the routine. They could shatter America's image of the Self and create a critical situation for the identity, since our review of the debate suggested many ethical and legal objections to their use. However, the following analysis aims to show how usage of AWS does find its way into US narrative of the self without significantly challenging it… at least at first sight.

Marouf Hasian does a discourse analysis of the American rhetoric concerning drone warfare and his findings will be the basis of this discussion. His focus is on the Obama administration[120], since that was the period when the usage of drones by the US military soared, but so did the controversies, most of them concerning the civilian casualties and adherence to the laws of war.[121] Hasian's main mission is to expose the rhetorical framing of the usage of drones by the US administration and his main argument is that the government does that in the attempt to avoid potential accusations of war crimes by the international community.[122] This research's results will largely guide the following discussion, but my aim is somewhat different than Hasian's. I will also take up the discourse analysis approach on the same source used by Hasian and highlight some points not mentioned in his research. Sources are president Obama's speech at the National Defense University from 2013[123], as well as John Brennan's speech analyzed by

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[120] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, chap. 6.
[121] Mardell, "Is Obama's Drone Doctrine Counter-Productive?"; Jackson, "If Obama Apologized for 1 Civilian Drone Victim Every Day, It Would Take Him 3 Years"; "After the Dead Are Counted: U.S. and Pakistani Responsibilities to Victims of Drone Strikes"; McKelvey, "Covering Obama's Secret War."
[122] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 128.
[123] "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

Hasian[124] and his other speech on drone warfare that I bring into the analysis[125]. I find this a relevant source for assessing the state's position towards UAVs for the same reason mentioned before. President is not only the political leader of the state, but he is also the Commander in Chief and thus has a significant role in framing the involvement in conflicts. CIA official is an important representative of the state's defense system. Besides that, the audience they address is mostly the future federal staff and the people who will oversee implementing government security policies, one of which is also the usage of autonomous weapons systems.

In the light of the ontological security theory, I will argue that this kind of justification for usage of drones serves a higher cause – protecting and upholding the US sense of self. Not only that, but the said "immunization"[126] against prosecutions for war crimes serves to preempt the sense of internal shame induced by possible discrepancies between the self-narrative and the practice. The first impression of the findings is that the reasoning and justification of drone warfare leans almost completely on the general US narrative of the self and its wars, with its cornerstone in the exceptionality of US's values, mission and the threat to their security.

First, most of the arguments laid out by the administration, except a few, concern framing the situation and explaining circumstances which led to the inevitable use of drones in warfare. For the sake of fulfilling rhetorical purposes, we should not expect a thorough technical or ethical analysis of the use from the government's public addresses. Still, there is a clear focus of

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[124] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 147–49; *John Brennan on Drone Strikes*.
[125] "John Brennan Delivers Speech On Drone Ethics."
[126] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 128.

the rhetoric on the jus ad bellum justifications for using drones, whereas the information regarding the way they are being used is left mostly to be debated by the public (media and academics).

For the almost whole stream of Hasian's argumentation, justifying drone wars follows the pattern laid out by Hodges. In terms of upholding the self-narrative, the US uses more or less the same rhetoric as in framing its identity, highlighting the aspects of drone warfare which affirm and strengthen the sense of self.

As we have seen through the discursive practice of US president, there is an evident routinized framework for understanding the US identity and how it wages war. However, this routine threatens to be disturbed by the use of UAVs and weapons with more autonomy. Critical situation in this sense would emerge if the domestic or the international public became aware of the inconsistency of the US narrative and the practice and formed an opposition to it, making it reflect on its own identity.[127] Thus, the US framing of UAVs addresses possible issues, to prevent the emergence of this type of critical situation.

Hasian, like Hodges, identifies dichotomies which serve to "invite audiences to juxtapose"[128] the US and the terrorists. Clean/dirty (in terms of waging war), precise/chaotic (in terms of tactics and the weapons), legal/illegal (in terms of justifications of military actions)[129] divides delineate not only the justifications for targeted killings by UAVs, but they also serve for the public to link the practice with the US identity.

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[127] Steele, "'Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'," 256.
[128] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 129.
[129] Hasian, 129.

3.2.1 Legal justification

. The threat terrorists pose was not first seen here, but in the aftermath of 9/11 and passing the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) act, which was aimed at waging war against those responsible for 9/11 and their associates.[130] This event is still invoked as the strongest rhetorical tool and the reminder of what terrorists are capable of. Not only that, but it also serves as an intro into legal justification of waging war through the AUMF act.[131] As the threat is "continuing and imminent"[132], America must defend itself, and there is a significant space for justification within AUMF act. Self-defense[133] is the primary stepping stone on the path of justifying war on terror and its methods. With this act, it becomes legally justified. It should be noted that the US rarely does invoke the international law in this rhetoric, because apparently it does not resonate with the domestic audience. The US seeks legality within itself and its laws, proving that the practice is not contradictory to their system. This is followed by the argument that the war on terror falls out of the conventional warfare, since it is waged against unconventional fighters such as "terrorist enemies"[134] and thus requires an unconventional approach, like UAVs.

> *"So, this is a just war -- a war waged proportionally, in last resort, and in self-defense."*

- Barrack Obama at the National Defense University (2013)[135]

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As the war is legal and it has arisen out of self-defense against a permanent threat of terrorism, the narrative suggests all the other options are drained out. Not only is the warfare the

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[130] "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."
[131] "John Brennan Delivers Speech On Drone Ethics."
[132] "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."
[133] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 130.
[134] Hasian, 128.
[135] "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

only way to deal with the terrorist threat, but autonomous weapons seemed to be "the only game in town"[136] in the matter of means by which the war is waged. This is framed through various arguments.

3.2.2   Clean and precise

The production of the enemy follows the lines of Hodges's argumentation, so it is reduced to individuals.[137] The US government tends to focus on the **key nodes** in terrorist networks, executing them mostly by targeted killings using drones. The argument is that the organization will fall if the masterminds are captured and/or killed, and so it was the case since the hunt for Osama bin Laden.[138] Hasian argues that this individualization of the threat helps the US administration avoid dealing with deeper, structural issues which caused the outbreak of terrorism.[139] Still, I contend there is more to it. By reducing the terrorist network to targeting key nodes, it becomes ethically easier to justify the use drones against individuals who have so much power over the whole organization and who embody such evil. Thus, it aligns with the narrative that the US acts only in self-defense and is friends with the people and enemies with the terrorists and dictators.

Besides that, it removes a crucial issue with the use of drones on particular people – **proportionality**. This is connected to another line of argumentation, which advances the **efficacy** argument in favor of autonomous weapons. Hasian analyses the speech of John Brennan, former from 2012, he talked about drone ethics and he outlined the basic arguments of the US administration and the motives they use to approximate the arguments to the public. He

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[136] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 138.
[137] Hasian, 130; "John Brennan Delivers Speech On Drone Ethics."
[138] Long, "Whack-a-Mole or Coup de Grace? Institutionalization and Leadership Targeting in Iraq and Afghanistan," 472.
[139] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 143.

compares terrorists to **"cancerous tumors"**[140], a condition which is bound to be treated and can escalate at any point and cause the death of the patient (democracy, freedom, etc.). To remove cancer, to continue in his manner, you have to localize it as soon as possible and aggressively remove it. In this kind of situation, the only way and the best way it could be done is with **"surgical precision"**[141] of the drones. This clearly highlights the **clean war argument**, where the removal of terrorists by drones is considered something necessary and stripped of any selfish motives, so it is not to be questioned. Moreover, Brennan says "I think the American people expect us to use advanced technologies, for example, to prevent attacks on U.S. forces and to remove terrorists from the battlefield"[142], identifying this practice as something that is American thing to do.[143] This directly links the use of drones and the American identity.

> *"So, it is **false to assert**[144] that putting boots on the ground is less likely to result in civilian deaths or less likely to create enemies in the Muslim world. The results would be more U.S. deaths, more Black Hawks down, more confrontations with local populations, and an inevitable mission creep in support of such raids that could easily escalate into new wars."*

- Barrack Obama at the National Defense University (2013)[145]

Obama administration further argues that it is inefficient to "put the boots on the ground".

This means that deploying ground troops would mean more resources wasted, but also a bigger risk. If the war is unconventional, the rules are changed. It is waged against an organization, not a state, so the battlefield is redefined. First, it would mean putting men of the military at risk, but, more importantly, it would mean putting at risk the civilians, that are all

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[140] "John Brennan Delivers Speech On Drone Ethics"; Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 147.

[141] "John Brennan Delivers Speech On Drone Ethics"; Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 147.

[142] *John Brennan on Drone Strikes*; Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 148–49.

[143] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 148–49.

[144] Highlighted by the author.

[145] Remarks by the President at the National Defense University. The White House Archives.

over the place, in order to capture/kill one or a few persons. Hence, the war waged in such way would be **chaotic and dirty**, whereas the US tends to fight **clean and precise**.

Contrary to the narrative, the US has troubles reporting the civilian deaths caused by their drone attacks and their reports are often challenged by independent estimates of other organizations, such as the Bureau for Investigative Journalism or Open Society Foundations[146]. While Brennan claimed there were effectively no collateral deaths from the drone attacks[147], Obama stated that their highest standard is that no civilians are injured[148].

Hasian also notes that they speak in euphemisms, where civilian deaths are described as "a few" and "incidents", making it too abstract to argue against.[149] Accusations of the problematic civilian deaths meet the reminder of carpet bombings and the damage they pose to civilian population and infrastructure.[150] This limit is put on two choices against terrorists – conventional bombing or drone bombing. It is very clear that the latter is more precise and more effective than the former, but, as Hasian mentioned, there are other ways to address the issue and the administration ignores them. To conclude the narrative about the protection of civilians, Obama invokes in his speech probably the weakest of arguments in our terms, but still the one that appeals the most to the emotions:

> *"Remember that the terrorists we are after target civilians, and the death toll from their acts of terrorism against Muslims dwarfs any estimate of civilian casualties from drone strikes."*

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[146] Serle, "Obama Drone Casualty Numbers a Fraction of Those Recorded by the Bureau"; "After the Dead Are Counted: U.S. and Pakistani Responsibilities to Victims of Drone Strikes."
[147] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 147; *John Brennan on Drone Strikes*.
[148] "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."
[149] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 148.
[150] "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

-     Barrack Obama at the National Defense University (2013)[151]

This introduces another dichotomy which enforces the previous image of the US morals and intentions – terrorists kill civilians on purpose and US kills civilians by accident. This covers and affirms the part of the narrative which is highlights **protection of civilians** to the biggest extent possible and fulfilling its obligation to free them from the unjust people that hold the power. Therefore, the US needs to use drones to fulfill its duty and defend itself and the world in the most efficient and humane way.

For the sake of upholding the US identity, the argument of clean and precise war affirms the claim that everything they are doing is protecting themselves and the rest of the world from the ultimate and inevitable evil, doing so in a collected, dispassionate manner.

Having all of this in mind, I gather that use of drones, i.e. autonomous weapon systems, as it is framed here by the US administration, serves very well to uphold the narrative of the US self and the justness and justifiability of their actions.
Still, the challenge to the US narrative of the self does not come only from possible accusations of breaking the law of war. It comes from many other directions and one of them concerns the topic I firstly brought out when starting this discussion and it is also the second part of the argument I am bringing forward.

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[151] "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University."

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3.3   Challenges of the military ethics – H2

What happens when the values of the military and the values of the nation are no longer complementary?   In this part, I will address the possible challenges to the US narrative of the Self coming from the relationship between the use of autonomous weapons and the development of military virtue.

3.3.1   Virtue ethics

First, as Schulzke points out, most of the armies of the world follow the ethical model based on Aristotelian virtue, which is based on a balanced behavior between deprivation and excess.[152] This means that the virtue is embodied in finding that golden mean, as the most favorable mode of conduct. One of those armies is the US, where this model is dominant, even though it is not the only one. It also mixes with rule-based ethics which, Schulzke finds, makes it a hybrid type.[153] So, Aristotelian virtue ethics is based on the values of a character, it is not guided by strict rules.[154] In this ethical style, values are contextual, and they are based on the social role we play. Virtue is tied to our function in the society, so there is naturally such thing as the military virtue, which distinguishes it from other functions in the society.[155] This interpretation is found in Jensen's discussion between virtue and rule-based ethics, where he notes that social roles do not depend only on their own context, but they also depend on the context of the whole society. Playing a role in the society, we participate in the "larger social and political project" which is, in this understanding, reaching the consensual common good of the

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[152] Schulzke, "Rethinking Military Virtue Ethics in an Age of Unmanned Weapons," 189.
[153] Schulzke, 190.
[154] Jensen, "Epictetus vs. Aristotle," 101.
[155] Jensen, 104.

whole community.[156] As Vallor notes, virtues are "states of character"[157]. They are expressed contextually so, in the military, state of the person's character is the military service as a way of life.[158] However, as mentioned before, this goes beyond just military setting. Virtues are relational, Vallor adds, so military serving a nation is a matter of "recognized relationships and obligations" to that nation, which is made possible by the socialization of identity through state institutions.[159]

In the context of the US, we could have seen from the previously described narratives of warfare and of the nation which standards need to be upheld in the combat. As seen in Sparrow's critique, they would include, among others, "...Honor; Courage; and Commitment"[160]. And even though it seems the AWS has rhetorically found its place in maintaining those standards, there are numerous disputes and complaints regarding this.

3.3.2 Risk and virtue-less war

One of the biggest issues raised was that the employment of AWS in warfare creates a "virtue-less war"[161]. As the AWS deployed by the US are still controlled by humans, Schulzke believes that the biggest question is whether the soldiers guiding the weapons on the battlefield are ethical.[162] Critics of the drone warfare believe this is impossible to achieve.

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[156] Jensen, 105–6.
[157] Vallor, "Armed Robots and Military Virtue," 172.
[158] Vallor, 173.
[159] Vallor, 173.
[160] Sparrow, "War without Virtue?," 86.
[161] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 107.
[162] Schulzke, "Rethinking Military Virtue Ethics in an Age of Unmanned Weapons," 188.

> *"At first sight, at least, there is something profoundly disturbing about the idea of a war conducted by computer console operators, who are watching over and killing people thousands of kilometers away."* [163]

The root of the war without virtue is produced by the condition of the "risk asymmetry"[164], which is again the result of the way war is waged. This means essentially that the soldiers manning the AWS have no physical risk in the combat in comparison to their adversaries, thus making this style of warfare unethical. Korać draws on Grossman[165] arguing that "the increase of distance between soldier and target on the battlefield lowers their empathic connection, which means that pulling the trigger becomes far easier than when we are face to face with the enemy soldier at short distance"[166] This is in line with the requests of traditional Aristotelian virtue ethics, where the courage and the virtue is expressed mostly in the facing the enemy, no matter the risk.[167] Thus, this is one of the arguments on which critics claim drone warriors are dishonorable[168] and even unmanly[169] for not having skin in the game, i.e. for not risking and/or sacrificing their life for the sake of the military goal.

Some may say that these remarks are only the remnants of old social constructs in the military, yet they carry certain risks. As there is a presumed role and behavior soldiers are socialized into, the natural expectation is that they will have an opportunity to express their identity. Still, Schulzke admits this kind of warfare takes away the opportunity of the soldiers to express virtue, courage and honor in the same way as ground troops[170]. To further the argument,

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[163] Sparrow, "War without Virtue?," 89.
[164] Schulzke, "Rethinking Military Virtue Ethics in an Age of Unmanned Weapons," 187.
[165] Grossman, *On Killing*.
[166] Korac, "Depersonalisation of Killing," 59.
[167] Schulzke, "Rethinking Military Virtue Ethics in an Age of Unmanned Weapons," 159.
[168] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 21.
[169] Hasian, 24.
[170] Schulzke, "Rethinking Military Virtue Ethics in an Age of Unmanned Weapons," 195.

Sparrow even says that they are probably not able to express or develop any other virtue that is considered military.[171]

Robillard notices a tension between soldiers' capacities and desire to express the identity acquired through the army, on the one hand, and their desire not to ever engage in killing.[172] He calls this "the paradox of soldiers' identity"[173]. In their desire to affirm their identity and be useful, Robillard says, soldiers can resort to over-eagerness and aggressively look for the opportunity to express themselves.[174] As people tend to be timid in war, Robillard adds, Aristotelian golden mean would be to be overly bold in military actions.[175] In addition to that, he cites Grossman[176] who noted that socialization in army is such that it "increases likelihood of soldiers erring on the side of pulling triggers rather than not"[177].

With all said, I would like to use this theory and adapt it to the following discussion. I would argue that, if soldiers socialized in such ethical system, which encourages taking risk and sacrificing yourself, cannot express that identity, they might try to compensate it in inadequate settings. This means that soldiers who cannot express common courage on ground, but can with UAVs, may err on the side of pulling the trigger when not necessary in order to compensate. This could be more detrimental, since they are manning powerful weapons which already have a lower threshold and risk of getting hurt, so they only require the push of the button. Moreover,

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[171] Sparrow, "War without Virtue?," 90.
[172] Robillard, "Risk, War, and the Dangers of Soldier Identity," 2–3.
[173] Robillard, 2.
[174] Robillard, 3–4.
[175] Robillard, 6.
[176] Grossman, *On Killing*.
[177] Robillard, "Risk, War, and the Dangers of Soldier Identity," 8.

this is supported by Sparrow's suggests that there does not have to be much moral courage to pull the trigger, so sometimes soldiers can forget that they are shooting real people.[178]

For the image and the Self of the whole state, this could lead to more incidents or unwanted damages to civilians, thus breaking the international law. It could then spark international and domestic controversies and accusations because of the discrepancy between the narrative and the behavior on the battlefield, as Steele calls it "reflexive discourse"[179]. This could result in self-shaming as well as condemnations from the outside due to exposed practices.

All of this plays into the argument that we are living in the post-heroic age of warfare.[180] This means that the way war is waged is not aligned with the conventional understandings of heroism and sacrifice.

3.3.3   Imaging of the drone warrior

However, physical risk is not the only type of risk, since some research suggests drone operators suffer from PTSD, anxiety, depression etc. as a result of war activities, although they are not physically endangered.[181] In his remark about the lack of the possibility to express virtue, Schulzke adds that there are other types of courage in the case of drone warriors, and enduring psychological pressure is one of them.[182] In order to humanize drone warriors and take the stigma off them in the public, Hasian argues, government and media engage in heroic portrayals of drone warriors.[183] He further argues this serves for the public to identify with them and separate

[178] Sparrow, "War without Virtue?," 95.
[179] Steele, "`Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'," 256.
[180] Kirkpatrick, "Drones and the Martial Virtue Courage," 208.
[181] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 109.
[182] Schulzke, "Rethinking Military Virtue Ethics in an Age of Unmanned Weapons," 195.
[183] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 109.

them clearly from their adversaries, advancing the dichotomy posed in the official narrative of the state.[184] However, there is more to this imaging of the drone operators as heroes, which serves to sustain the self-narrative. Namely, as Steele notes in the case of Abu Ghraib, aesthetics are very important for the preservation of the identity. Framing drone warriors as conventional heroes, who sacrifice and suffer because war, releases them from the mistrust from the people, but it also preempts other mechanism called "self-interrogative imaging"[185]. Here the aesthetics of the state identity are endangered, but they can be prevented by framing our side of the story as doing the right thing. On the other hand, it can also result in shaming and redefining the narrative.

3.3.4   Nintendo medal

To advance this from the position of the state, and to recognize that they have made a sacrifice, it has been attempted to institute something like Medal of Honor, **Distinguished Warfare Medal**. This would make drone warriors both appealing to the public and satisfied because they get recognition for their work as all the other soldiers.[186] Still, this attempt was mocked and called **"The Nintendo Medal"**, alluding to drone operators being called **"PlayStation Warriors"**. Some of them commented it would even downgrade the value of other medals. It was opposed by war veterans and recipients of other notable medals[187], so it did not survive the test of the professional public. To make the matter even more complicated, Schulzke notes how drone operators came a long way from being marginalized and less paid than regular

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[184] Hasian, 110.
[185] Steele, "'Ideals That Were Really Never in Our Possession'," 256.
[186] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 121.
[187] "VFW Wants New Medal Ranking Lowered."

soldiers[188], a position that already frames them as outcasts and underdogs of conventional military.

3.3.5   Legitimate warrior

Vallor correctly asserts that the legitimacy of the military actions also lies in the eyes of the public.[189] Military professionals profess their identity to their community by upholding its values and serving it.[190] If that community, both laic and professional, does not have the impression that drone operators are actually sacrificing themselves, it would disqualify drone operators as illegitimate warriors who do not express their presumed professional identity adequately. Thus, they fail to fulfill their social role. Further on, as Sparrow explains, these accounts of military virtue play a mediating role between the military and the wider society.[191] Considering this, if there are no accounts of drone operators expressing military virtue accepted by the public, they virtually play no role in upholding the national identity and values, and it could perhaps even said that they work against that.

As we can see, there is a strong opposition within the military to recognize drone operators as "their own", thus leaving them in the gray zone of the military virtue excellence. This could be a potential twofold issue; first, it slows down the integration of drone operators into the army, creating a separate, non-aligned identity; second, it leaves them out of the narrative about the virtuous professionals, thus restricting their connection to the public, their acceptance and perception as legitimate warriors. While their number and role are growing in comparison to conventional troops, it would be rather an issue for the future of the image of the US if they were stopped from conveying and sustaining national identity and the narrative of the

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[188] Schulzke, "Rethinking Military Virtue Ethics in an Age of Unmanned Weapons," 193.
[189] Vallor, "Armed Robots and Military Virtue," 181–82.
[190] Vallor, 176.
[191] Sparrow, "War without Virtue?," 86.

Self, while existing in the ethical and identity vacuum of their own. As Coker and Roscini note "we are tenaciously holding to the myth of the warrior, as something that we can't let go off".[192] Perhaps our cultural patterns change way slower than our real possibilities, but these situations may lead to redefinition of our standards of virtue.

When it comes to the direct relationship between the military and the state, another issue can arise. Sparrow, namely, suggests there might be a problem with UAV operators expressing loyalty to institutions of the state. As this loyalty is expressed by sacrifice and embodiment of the national identity and values, their options are fairly limited. Sparrow argues that they can express loyalty only in the way any employee is loyal to his employer and that is that he does his job well, tries hard and does not leave the company.[193] He further concludes there is not specific in the military sense here. Considering previous accounts and arguments of how these types of warriors are being sidelined and unable to express virtue, problem is imminent. If they are unable to express loyalty which signals upholding ethical standards and fighting for higher causes of the state, then they cannot convey national identity at all.

All of these issues are potential hotbeds for further detachment of UAV operators from the community and its identity, which would make them inadequate to sustain state narratives about the usage of autonomous weapons. If the ones using them are not able to support the arguments and the narrative of the state about it, it would come to clash with the general narrative where this one part of the military clearly stands out in the ethical and identity sense. This would then lead to confusion and the discrepancies between the state narrative and the

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[192] Hasian, *Drone Warfare and Lawfare in a Post-Heroic Age*, 123.
[193] Sparrow, "War without Virtue?," 98.

military behavior that cannot follow it, which would require further measures to redefine the story or redefine the practice.

3.3.6 Autonomous future

In the end, as mentioned, the US refuses to participate in the world initiative to put moratorium on the development of full autonomous weapons. As noted by Korać, US military aims to implement the Strategy for Robotic and Autonomous Systems. "In the long-term (2031–2040), this strategy foresees the construction and engagement of autonomous land and aircraft systems that would allow for the concentration of commanders exclusively on the overall process of execution of combat operations, instead of control of robots in executing individual tasks."[194] This means that it is probably in the process of developing something similar to full autonomy, as are a few other states, like Russia and Israel. This could imply a whole lot of problems for the future framing of the US identity regarding their use.

Even if there would be virtually no American men losing their lives, that kind of warfare would be completely disproportionate and unethical. Since robots have no moral subjectivity, they would not be able to sustain the argument of upholding morality in warfare. Although it could be considered common knowledge, Vallor reminds that robots are not able to sacrifice themselves for no one.[195] Thus, they cannot express any military professional identity. They can only dispassionately perform the tasks, without being involved into the wider social and political project we mentioned. They play no social role so, in terms of domestic situation, they could not convey any part of the national identity to the people, even if they are precise and save civilian

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[194] Korac, "Depersonalisation of Killing," 53–54.
[195] Vallor, "Armed Robots and Military Virtue," 174.

lives. They could not appeal to human audience and the audience could not identify with machines, since they could not embody any human characteristic. There probably would not be a medal for excellent robot achievements, since it neither gives any social incentive, nor it affects the robot's performance. When it comes to possible malfunctions, the first subject to refer to would be the government and it would be very hard to prove that the robot itself is guilty and that it is not only a matter of a few bad apples. These remarks remain purely speculative since there has not come a moment in which we can witness robot wars, but it is worth thinking about how long the values of the human character will play a role in framing and justifying the way we wage war.

Conclusion

When it comes to new technologies, there is always a little of healthy doubt and questioning surrounding its possible impact on the life as we know it. Although we can observe some things changing in the flesh, a lot of changes come unnoticed, and sometimes even unaddressed. Nowadays, when software has faster reactions and adapts to certain conditions faster than humans, it is a great challenge to keep our social practices up to date with the technological possibilities developing every day, and as we speak. The task of this piece of theoretical discussion was to see how seemingly contradictory practices can be reconciled with the power of language, arguments and motives, even just for a while.

I first started dealing with the extraordinarily rich topic of autonomous weapon systems, of which is yet to be talked about. As humans who have delegated most of the tasks to the machines we created, we are concerned with the last thing that has remained *differentia specifica* of human beings – moral consciousness. It is rather hard to assume whether robots will be able to achieve the same, but they still mold and affect our own morality by breaking the rules and pushing the boundaries of allowed behavior. One of the areas they had the most impact was warfare, precisely because they gained so much power over human life in the realm of war and so much different possibilities of employment that raise numerous ethical dilemmas.

Some states have developed these technologies sooner than others and they would not give up their military advantage, which is perfectly sensible in the line of thinking in which states only aim to survive. However, means of survival are not automatically consensual. States have to explain why and what they are doing, while that also has to be in line with what is expect of them in terms of behavior.

My aim here was to show that states can sometimes manage to get away with some things that are not in line with the expected behavior. I was looking at the case of the United States and the discrepancies about its self-narrative which emphasizes morality, protection of civilians and respecting the international law, on one hand, while using controversial and morally troubling technologies like unmanned aerial vehicles, on the other hand. My take on that was from the point of ontological security theory, where I wanted to see how the US rhetorically and discursively frames and reconciles this discrepancy.

I first set out to elaborate on literature about the interplay of military ethics and the use of autonomous weapons. I described and analyzed the two narratives; one was the narrative of the US about the Self and the other one was the narrative justifying their use of unmanned weapons in warfare. My analysis of speech acts and recurring motives in the rhetoric of US presidents brought me to the conclusion that the narrative about the use of UAVs satisfies very well the need to uphold the narrative of the self. This is so because the narrative is framed in such a way where the focus is on the aspects of UAVs which present them as the extensions of already existing values and the identity of the US. It was mostly based on satisfying jus ad bellum and some technical aspects of Jus in Bello. However, I contended this was not enough to sustain the national identity and narrative in the long term.

Thus, my third part of the discussion examined the challenges posed by the use of UAVs from the point of development of military virtue. I figured there are serious criticisms from the ethical perspective which highlight the lack of military virtue in those operating the UAVs. This distinguishes them from the regular military and there are potential future as well as indicative current issues with drone operators conveying the identity of the state and the values they are expected to. In the magic circle of misunderstanding between the orthodox, virtue-oriented

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military profession and the specific and unconventional workings of the drone operators, there are potential dangers of detachment of drone operators from the community and the greater discrepancy in their behavior on the battlefield and the narrative and justifications of the state. This bears the danger of the state facing shame from inside and outside and thus calls for reconsidering the existing narratives and adapting them to new practices.

In the end, I briefly laid out some possible issues arising out of the speculations of development of fully autonomous robots in battle. This is a whole new debate and requires more development and body of literature, so it remains in the domain of speculation for a while.

When it comes to the main topic, I believe this is a very fruitful area which is yet to be developed and researched. It provides great possibilities for cross-disciplinary research with strategic studies, sociology, psychology, philosophy, as well as semantics and discourse analysis. This research provides one look at the particular case, but it could be a valuable addition to the critical studies concerning power-led political discourses, social dynamics in producing meanings, as well as of course ethical debates on the possibilities of approximating the use of robotics to our idea of humane conduct.

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