

# UAVs and Air Control on the North-West Frontier: Re-Fighting the Last War?

Christopher M Wyatt, Research Fellow,  
Institute for Conflict, Co-operation and Security,  
University of Birmingham

# The Argument

The analogy linking interwar air control and air policing to UAV use today is overstated and flawed.

# Content

- Introduction
- Reasons why Air Control in the 1920's and the use of UAVs today are different
- Conclusions

# Introduction

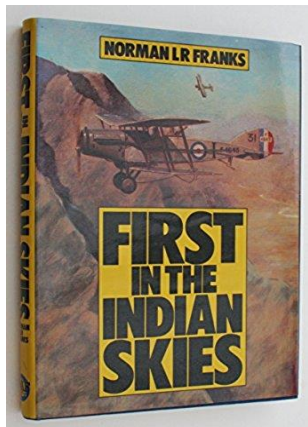
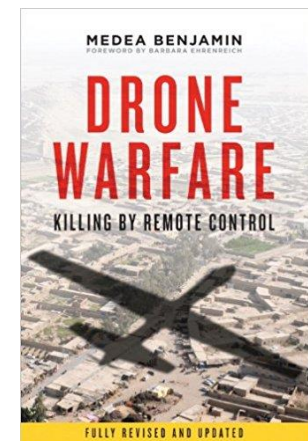
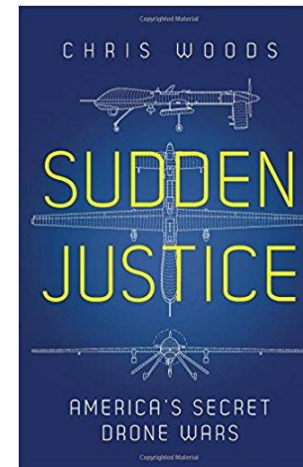
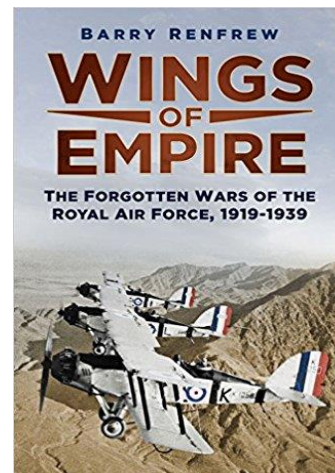
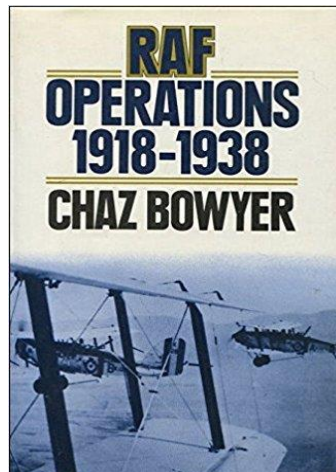
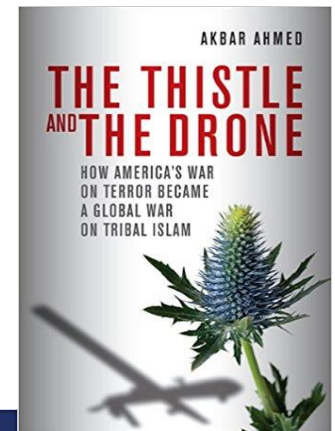
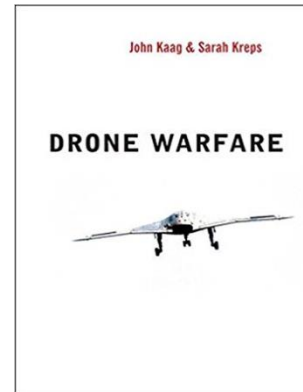
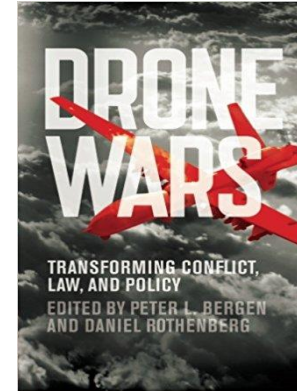
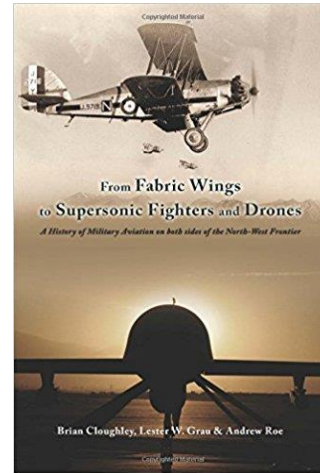
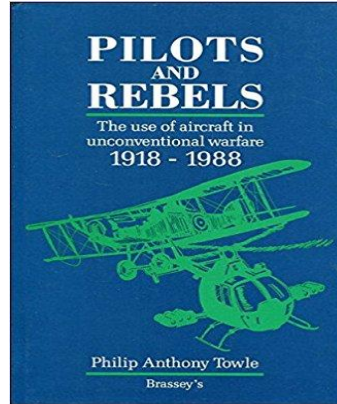
- Definitions
- Literature
- Maps
- Summary



# Definitions

- Air Control – Control of an area by air
- Air Policing – Policing activities by air
- Air Proscription – Punitive operations, keeping the population from their pattern of life
- Air Substitution – Doing more using aerial assets with less reliance on ground troops
- Air Operations – Military operations entailing co-operation between air and ground forces

# Some of the Literature



# Primary Sources

- WO 106 – Waziristan
- AIR 5 – Air Historical Branch
- FO 402 – Afghanistan Consulate
- FO 371 – Afghanistan Foreign Office
- L/Mil/17 – India Office Military



Scale = 1:5000000 or 24.6 Miles to  
*English Miles*





# Waziristan



# Areas of Similarity

- Pioneering Use of Pioneering Technologies
- Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)
- Relative Lack of Cost
- Concern over Civilian Casualties and Collateral Damage

# Four Areas of Difference

- Different Policy Objectives
- Different Mission Sets
- International law in the 1920's functioned differently and was seen differently to today.
- Responses on the ground were different in the 1920's to those today.

# Policy



# Policy – Two Points of Difference

## 1. Type of Action

- Interwar – Counterinsurgency
- Today – Counter-Terrorism

## 2. Links with Ground Forces

- Air Control cannot be carried out by air power alone
- The use of UAVs is air power alone



# Mission Types



# Types of Mission using UAVs

- Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)
- Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR)
- Force Protection
- Aerial Interdiction
- Decapitation

# Types of Mission in the 1920's

- Reconnaissance
- Leafleting
- Co-ordination with artillery and spotting
- Strafing with Small Arms Fire
  - People
  - Flocks
- Bombing with small Bombs and Incendiaries
  - People
  - Buildings
  - Orchards and Crops

# Air Policing in March 1923

Summary of Material Expended and Hours Flown during Operations for Week Ending 17th March 1923 (AIR 5/1330)

	Bombs			Rounds SAA	Plates	Flying	
	230lb	112lb	20lb		Exposed	Hours	Minutes
The 11th of March	5	40	163	4375	8	49	5
The 12th of March	8	16	82	3780	0	27	5
The 13th of March	6	12	89	570	0	25	35
The 14th of March	5	10	74	910	0	24	10
The 15th of March	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The 16th of March	0	0	0	0	0	4	50
The 17th of March	8	16	135	1650	0	42	10
Total	32	94	543	11285	8	172	55

Total weight of bombs dropped during week	12 tons, 16, cwts, 76 pounds
Total weight of bombs dropped since commencement of operations	132 tons, 11 cwts, 44 pounds
Average serviceability of machines during the week	5 DH9As 8 Bristols
Total hours (war flying) since commencement of operations	1612 hours and 15 minutes

# UAV Strikes, 2004-2009

## The Bush Years

- Total CIA drone strikes      51
- Total reported killed:      410-595
- Civilians reported killed: 167-332
- Children reported killed: 102-129
- Total reported injured:      175-277

Source: Bureau of Investigative Journalism, <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/drone-war/data/the-bush-years-pakistan-strikes-2004-2009>



# International Law



# International Law

- Fundamentally Different Understandings and Values
- In the 1920's International Law was for the European States and other Advanced Powers
- Today International Law based in Humanity, Proportionality, Distinction and Military Necessity

# International Law in 1924\*

## **Legitimacy of Air Operations**

In warfare against savage tribes who do not conform to codes of civilised warfare aerial bombardment is not necessarily limited in its methods or objectives by rules agreed upon in international law. The only test is that air operations should be carried out with due regard to the principles of ordinary humanity.

Aerial bombing is legitimate in all cases where it would be permissible to employ military force, but since the punishment inflicted may be severe it must be justified by the seriousness of the offence.

Danger to non-combatants is inseparable from the use of the bomb. Bombing is inherently no more indiscriminate than shell fire, but is capable of far wider application. The tribesmen are admittedly a barbarous and vindictive enemy, but it is in our own interests not to embitter their feelings towards us by any wanton use of a weapon which must to a certain extent endanger their women and children whatever precaution in the shape of giving warning be taken.

The facility and rapidity with which air action can be used renders it necessary to guard against undue haste or thoughtless application. For this reason the power to order aerial bombing not immediately connected with the action of troops will not be vested in local commanders or political officers, but previous reference must always be made to Headquarters for sanction.

\*AIR 5/1328, Employment of Aircraft on the North-West Frontier of India, 1 March 1924, pages 2 and 3

# Imperial Air Policing

‘To establish a tradition, therefore, which will prove effective, if only a threat of what is to follow afterwards is displayed, the Air Force must, if called upon to administer punishment, do it with all its might and in the proper manner. One objective must be selected—preferably the most inaccessible village of the most prominent tribe which it is desired to punish. All available aircraft must be collected. . . . The attack with bombs and machine guns must be relentless and unremitting and carried on continuously by day and night, on houses, inhabitants, crops and cattle. . . . This sounds brutal, I know, but it must be made brutal to start with. The threat alone in the future will prove efficacious if the lesson is once properly learnt.’

Wing Commander J. A. Chamier, “The Use of Air Power for Re-placing Military Garrisons,” *RUSI Journal* 66 (February–November 1921): 205–12, especially 210.

# International Law and UAV Use Today

- US View on Imminence and Self Defence
- Differing European Position
- No International Consensus on the Letter of the Law



# Responses on the Ground



# Responses on the Ground in the 1920's

Most Intelligence from the time from airmen who crash landed.  
Broadly there were three responses:

- Lack of hostility as action was seen to have been taken against enemy or rival villages or due to tribal codes regarding *nanawatai* and *melmestia* – sanctuary and hospitality.
- Demoralisation caused by the level of destruction.
- If a village were bombed while they were there, their hosts would shoot them.

# Responses on the Ground Today

Responses are on several levels:

- Pakistani National Level Discussion regarding Sovereignty and Civilian Casualties.
- Local ‘Tribal’ Level Discussion regarding Militants and Civilian Casualties.
- Discussion on Militants regarding Causation of Attacks, Effects on Operations and Efficacy of UAVs.

# Conclusions

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- Different Mission Sets
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