Abstract

**Prejudice and Support for US Drone Strikes Targeting Americans Abroad**

The United States has at times used drones to target and kill United States citizens suspected of being associated with terrorist networks abroad. As the scope, location, and frequency of these attacks increases, it is important to take into account the American public’s opinion on the targeting of American citizens. Conversely, it is also important to take into account an underlying prejudice that may exist within public opinion as a result of the 9/11 attacks. The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain whether prejudice towards a perceived Muslim or Arab status has generated differing attitudes on the acceptability of using drone strikes to target American terrorists who have moved abroad. Overall the results from this research indicate partial support for the hypotheses. The treatment variable in our experiment, where the target of a hypothetical drone strike was portrayed as Muslim or Arab, elicited more punitive action from participants in most sections of the experiment. These results are consistent with the existing literature on prejudice, which indicate that in the face of a perceived threat the in-group may hold more authoritarian attitudes toward a perceived outgroup. Prejudice directed towards a perceived outgroup may be one factor that explains polls that indicate there is strong public support for drone strikes that target American citizens who have joined terrorist organizations abroad.