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A Theory Of The Drone



Synopsis

Drone warfare has raised profound ethical and constitutional questions both in the halls of Congress and among the U.S. public. Not since debates over nuclear warfare has American military strategy been the subject of discussion in living rooms, classrooms, and houses of worship. Yet as this groundbreaking new work shows, the full implications of drones have barely been addressed in the recent media storm. In a unique take on a subject that has grabbed headlines and is consuming billions of taxpayer dollars each year, philosopher Geoffrey Chamayou applies the lens of philosophy to our understanding of how drones are changing our world. For the first time in history, a state has claimed the right to wage war across a mobile battlefield that potentially spans the globe. Remote-control flying weapons, he argues, take us well beyond even George W. Bush's justification for the war on terror. What we are seeing is a fundamental transformation of the laws of war that have defined military conflict as between combatants. As more and more drones are launched into battle, war now has the potential to transform into a realm of secretive, targeted assassinations of individuals beyond the view and control not only of potential enemies but also of citizens of democracies themselves. Far more than a simple technology, Chamayou shows, drones are profoundly influencing what it means for a democracy to wage war. *A Theory of the Drone* will be essential reading for all who care about this important question.

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Customer Reviews

Praise for *Manhunts*, Chamayou's previous book: "*Manhunts* is an unusual and stimulating essay. . . . The strength of the book lies in its refusal to treat manhunting as a metaphor. Chamayou instead focuses on the concrete violence of predation, tracking, banishment, captivity, confinement, and the murderousness that goes along with them."#151;Jean Berard, *Books and Ideas* "Man, wolf to man? Brecht asked the question, Chamayou provides a brilliant and terrifying answer."#151;Mike Davis, author of *City of Quartz* and *Planet of Slums* "From manhunting for sport in the Occident to the global search for illegal aliens in the twenty-first century, this book offers a history of humans preying on other human beings. Applying the rubric of hunting to contemporary debates about illegal migrants, Chamayou shows that the supposedly newest hunt refreshes an old motif. A provocative take on a topic of great currency."#151;Jimmy Casas Klausen, University of Wisconsin-Madison "In Chamayou's razor-sharp telling, drones fundamentally transform the psychic, moral, and physical space and art of killing. But it is his theory of the drone that is even more chilling. It demands that we consider the emergence of a new ethical and political norm of war that is neither war as we know it#151;nor peace. The #145;principle of immunity for the imperial combatant#151; rests on a twisted logic: On the one hand is the achieved capacity of the drone operative (one of many newly installed masters of #145;lethal surveillance#151;) to move throughout a day between killing fields and coffee breaks, between combat zones and home. On the other hand is the enlisting of a citizenry to accept the #145;moral obligation#151; to kill. In this compelling analysis, Amnesty International's classing of drone strikes as war crimes would be only part of the story. Chamayou's critical point is that drones alter the very terrain and logic of who deserves to die and implicates us all."#151;Ann Stoler, Willy Brandt Distinguished University Professor of Anthropology, New School for Social Research "A virtuoso performance: a wholly original, wide-ranging, and provocative critique of targeted killing from remote platforms that switches from the #145;big picture#151; to the detailed view with consummate skill and successfully calls into question many of the central claims advanced by the proponents of later modern war."#151;Derek Gregory, Peter Wall Distinguished Professor, University of British Columbia "Chamayou is brilliant. He jumps breezily from Freud and Camus to Marx and Mao, from Israeli and ancient Athenian generals to Russian researchers and Chinese strategists. If you stick with the wild ride, you'll find his arguments are breathtakingly profound and the translation is superb. Chamayou is masterful at unmasking just how ethically bankrupt and dangerous it is to kill people by remote control."#151;Medea Benjamin, cofounder of CODEPINK and author of *Drone Warfare*

Grégoire Chamayou is a research scholar in philosophy at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris. The author of *Manhunts: A Philosophical History*, he lives in Paris. Janet Lloyd has translated more than seventy books from the French by authors such as Jean-Pierre Vernant, Marcel Detienne, and Philippe Descola.

"A Theory of the Drone" by French author Gregoire Chamyou (translated by Janet Lloyd) offers an immensely valuable, timely and powerful critique of drone warfare including its implications for democracy. This exceptional, well-written and accessible book is divided into five parts:I. 'Techniques and Tactics' explains that drones were first proven by Israel, inspiring the U.S. to develop a drone program that shields its pilots from harm and thus makes asymmetrical warfare possible. Mr. Chamyou discusses how the "all seeing eye" of the drone's surveillance and information technologies intends to schematize targets in a legally dubious form of militarized manhunt. Although American generals believe that the unreachable power of drones will deprive the enemy of hope, the terrible randomness and imprecision of drone attacks has embittered locals and has thus perpetuated an unwinnable war. The author also warns that less expensive drone technologies will likely soon be developed by the resistance with dangerous and unpredictable consequences for us all.II. 'Ethos and Psyche' compares and contrasts the kamikaze's use of body as weapon with the drone's use of weapon without body. Mr. Chamyou contends that drones are in the tradition of colonial violence spatially waged against indigenous peoples through use of mercenaries and technology. As the traditional militarized ethics of courage and sacrifice have been challenged by the removal of drone operators from combat zones, Mr. Chamyou considers the military's spurious claim that drone pilots are bona fide warriors who suffer severe emotional traumas; and yet can somehow navigate seamlessly between deadly work at the air force base by day and peaceful domesticity at home by night.III. 'Necroethics' suggests that drones serve the purpose of blunting public criticisms of warmongering by virtually eliminating soldier casualties on the aggressor's side. Mr. Chamyou challenges the idea that drones are so-called 'humanitarian' weapons because the temptation to use violence to solve political problems becomes that much easier. Indeed, it seems the case that drones extend conflicts into non-combat zones where suspected militants cannot always be easily distinguished from civilian populations.IV. 'The Principles of the Philosophy of the Right to Kill' questions the government's claim of just cause while contending that drones represent assassins of state terror. In fact, Mr. Chamyou says that drones are legally ambiguous. Mr. Chamyou reasons that drones cannot be instruments of the military because they kill in non-combat zones; nor can drones be considered tools of policing because

capture of suspects is not possible. Fearing that drones might gain legal recognition simply because they exist, the author wants conscientious readers to understand that drones have the potential of reducing warfare as presently understood to high-tech butchery. V. 'Political Bodies' makes the point that drones mute the voices of citizens who might oppose war. Indeed, drones are marketed by defense contractors as a cheap and bloodless solution to the so-called 'Vietnam Syndrome' of mass resistance to state violence. Interestingly, Mr. Chamyou believes that as drones have made bodies less necessary to wage war, it has been easier for policymakers to care less for its citizens' social welfare. In that light, it is not difficult to imagine that drones will likely soon be deployed against the U.S. domestic population, as well. In fact, Mr. Chamyou suggests that drones might be programmed in the future to mechanically enforce the will of its "cold monster" imperial state masters who have immunized themselves from public opinion. The author hopes that Americans can learn to resist these ominous developments before it becomes too late. I highly recommend this enlightening, well-written and important book to everyone.

This is an excellent theory book. Liked the style

Very worthwhile read. Much more focused on the moral/philosophical side than the mechanical/technical. I bought several and gave them to my friends.

Rec'd on TIME and excellent!

good read

Good start for an understanding of the pros and cons of Drone activities.

The Art of War of the Drone. Read it.

This book is absolutely fabulous as a critical text looking at drone warfare and (as Chamayou puts it) the current necro-ethical mindset. I definitely recommend this text for anyone interested in a new analysis of the new kind of warfare.

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