

**“We have to make decisions based not on fear, but on
hard-earned wisdom.”^[1]**

President Obama’s use of historical analogies when justifying the
use of weaponized drones in the War on Terror

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[1] President Barack Obama on U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy at the National Defense University, May 23, 2013.

Abstract

The continued use of weaponized drones in the War on Terror has stirred up a heated debate, both in the scholarly and academic world, and there is still no conclusive empirical evidence to suggest that they are effective. As such, there ought to be factors other than efficacy that impact the decision-making process. One factor that may play a significant part in how policy makers deliberate over high stakes decisions is what cognitive theorists refer to as analogical reasoning - relating the present to the past and using this comparison as a guideline in the decision-making process. This study analyzes historical analogies used in public speeches and remarks by U.S. President Barack Obama to ascertain if there is evidence to suggest that analogical reasoning has been part of the decision-making process when it comes to drones, or if analogies mostly serve as a strategic tool to convey messages to the intended recipients. The findings suggest that in this instance, the analogies in relation to drones were used primarily in a strategic manner, but that cognitive analogical reasoning likely has been part of previous decisions in the War on Terror.

keywords: drone warfare, historical analogies, cognitive theory, decision-making, War on Terror

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and research problem

The use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, colloquially known as drones, in the War on Terror has notoriously stirred up a lot of debate, in both the public and scholarly domain¹. Issues such as the legality of American drones on foreign soil and the ethical aspects of unmanned warfare have been debated and studied, and the fact that drone strikes have, on several occasions, mistakenly resulted in the death of civilians, which over the years has led to a substantial death toll (Grut, 2012:21). This study explores the realm of decision making in relation to the use of drones and examines if there is evidence to suggest that analogical reasoning may have played a part in this process for the Obama administration. This, to further the understanding of why drones have been, and are continued to be deployed, in counter terrorism efforts, as well as to examine if the cognitive theories on historical analogies can be substantiated from looking at public speeches and remarks by President Barack Obama.

Drones are remotely piloted aircrafts that often look similar to small passenger airplanes, which can loiter and gather surveillance for hours on end in hard-to-reach areas, and when weaponized, are fitted with missiles (Kaag & Kreps, 2014:23). Government funding for unmanned systems was at the time of 9/11 around \$350 million, which increased to over \$5 billion a year by 2013 (Arkin, 2015:4). President Obama has been both criticized and lauded for the implementation of targeted killings via drone strike in counterterrorism efforts, where proponents of drones hail them as some of the most efficient weapons available today (Lewis, 2013). It is likely that few have missed, however, the public outrage sparked by the drone strikes that has ended up killing civilians instead of their intended target, and the U.S. has had to issue numerous apologies and admit wrongdoing in its use of drones in these instances (Baker & Hirschfield Davis, 2015).

¹ There are several terms which are used to describe what is commonly referred to as drones. The phrases include but are not limited to Remotely Piloted Vehicles/Aircraft (RPV/RPA), Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs), Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), drones, weaponized drones, and unmanned aircrafts. For the sake of legibility, the phrases are used interchangeably during the text. Unless otherwise stated, these phrases all refer the type of unmanned aircrafts deployed in the War on Terror, such as General Atomics MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper. For further technical and historical context, see Arkin, 2015.

Another heavily debated fact of the drone program was that so-called ‘signature strikes’ were a part of the Obama administration's counterterrorism strategy (Franz, 2017:114). These are strikes in which targets have been chosen using algorithms based on their ‘intelligence signature’ i.e., factors like continuous proximity to known terrorists and gathered cell phone data (Kaag & Kreps, 2014:32). These strikes are thus solely based on the patterns of behavior that is to be ‘expected’ of a terrorist (ibid.). Many find this unacceptable, and there have been consistent lobbying efforts and campaigns from various NGOs to regulate, restrict or even ban the usage of drones, often referred to by their opponents as *killer robots* (The Stop Killer Robots Foundation, 2021). This criticism is based on the idea that drone warfare, by its very nature, differs from traditional warfare, by introducing a much greater moral, and political, complexity into the calculations of the cost of war (Kaag & Kreps, 2014:53).

The public debate has touched upon both the risk of civilian casualties and the moral ambiguity of signature strikes, and more recently, the evolution of military technology, where drone technology is often touted as an example of weapons that stretch the limits of ethics and the legal rules of war (Sterio, 2012:214). This debate also centers around the risks of drones going from semi-autonomous, i.e., remotely piloted but still needing human input to fire, to fully autonomous, where decisions on strikes are made through artificial intelligence without human control (Scharre, 2020). This appears to have been the case in 2021, where according to a U.N. report from the Panel of Experts on Libya, there was a drone strike conducted where, upon examination, the drone in question appeared to need no human input to strike (The U.N. Panel of Experts on Libya, 2021:17).

The U.S. were for a long time considered the main “drone superpower”, given its extensive use and production of drones, but at least 88 other states own and operate unmanned vehicles, and upwards of fifty to some extent produce their own (Arkin, 2015:5). Recent reports indicate that Turkey and China are producing and exporting weaponized drones at an increasing rate (Cole, 2021). States that have been reported as having invested in weaponized drones include Yemen, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, India, Pakistan, Russia, and North Korea (Cole, 2021; Arkin, 2015:5). In the past year, both the United Kingdom and France were accused of authorizing drone strikes that caused high numbers of civilian casualties (Sabbagh, 2022; UN News, 2021).

It is not just a fiery public debate - academic research spanning over fields including law, philosophy and political science all touch on different aspects of drone implementation and the results of their use. The scholarly debate is rife with disagreements on the effectiveness of drones, where some argue that they are undoubtedly effective at what they are deployed to do, and some others argue that they are, in fact, more ineffective than other forms of warfare, and that they do not live up to their purpose (Rogers, 2017). However, while research is published regularly, the use of drones is still a novel concept - the first grand scale implementation of weaponized drones as a strategic tool was during the George W. Bush presidency. As such, we do not yet know the long term effects and outcomes of their use, and there is still not a general theoretical consensus regarding how to even measure their effects. There is also a lack of empirical evidence to suggest if drones are more efficient traditional forms of warfare (Arkin, 2015:7). Because of the lack of definitive empirical proof on effectiveness, investments in drone technology likely are not based on arguments of efficacy alone.

Ångström (2011) has shown that in numerous public speeches made by President George W. Bush, there are recurring references to historical analogies regarding the War on Terror, an at the time ongoing conflict which in many ways differ from the historical wars of the past that the U.S. has been involved in (Ångström, 2011:238). In war, high stakes decisions often must be made at short notice. The War on Terror, though, is the first conflict with widespread use of drones, making the choices connected to them both political and strategic, a novelty for first the Bush and later Obama administrations. As there has been such extensive criticism on the topic of drones, and because of the uncertainties regarding the actual results of the use of drones, there ought to be other factors present that justify the use of drones. This study looks at whether analogical reasoning could be said to be one of these factors.

Researchers suggest that decision makers use historical analogies as a cognitive tool to help in the decision-making process, and that they can play a part in the way important policy decisions are made. According to several studies, analogies can function as a cognitive tool in our brains to make sense of the world, minimizing cognitive work by comparing experiences and predicting outcomes, thereby guiding us in our decision-making process (Ryan & Bernard, 2003:90; Chan, Paletz & Schunn, 2012:1352; Houghton 1998:281). A study showing the proposed cognitive mechanisms behind the uses of historical analogies in foreign policy decision-making by Khong (1992), showed that decisions made during the Vietnam War were

often anchored in and justified by the use of historical analogies relating back to decisions made in previous conflicts such as the Korean War and the Second World War. The study argues that these justifications were often misplaced and led to what is widely regarded as ill-fated outcomes in the war (Khong, 1992:11). On the other hand, there are researchers who claim that decision makers use analogies in much more of a post-hoc, justification-based sentiment. Taylor and Rourke (1995) state that rather than analogical reasoning, decision makers are motivated by ideological persuasions and party affiliation, and that when they invoke historical analogies, it is to justify decisions after they have already been deliberated on and implemented (Taylor & Rourke, 1995:461). This divide between the cognitive and strategic functions of historical analogies means that scholars who study historical analogies often end up siding with one of these two arguments.

There appears to be virtually no studies on insights into the drone decision making process from public material. In general, drone research often focuses on the outcomes and results of drone use, or potential ethical and judicial constraints into whether or not drones should be allowed on the battlefield or not. This thesis aims to bridge this gap by analyzing speeches by President Obama to ascertain if he uses historical analogies when referencing or justifying the use of drones, and to see if it is possible to ascertain if these analogies have been present in the decision-making process. This, while also engaging in the debate on the cognitive/strategic divide, by using a framework that categorizes analogies to ascertain if they are more likely to be of a cognitive or strategic nature.

1.2. Aim and research question

This thesis aims examine the use of weaponized drones in conflict by examining if there is any evidence to suggest that historical analogies may have had an influence in the U.S. drone decision-making process during the War on Terror, and if so, how. It also investigates if it is possible to find signs that the cognitive theory of historical analogies and analogical reasoning could provide insight into the decision-making process in instances such as with the uses of weaponized drones. It aims to find out if it is possible to make the claim that the use of analogies has played a role in the cognitive processes of the use of drones in the War on Terror, or if it appears as if historical analogies were used more as a strategic tool to justify this use.

As there appears to be virtually no research on historical analogies and the use of weaponized drones yet, this study aims to fill this quite significant gap in the literature and propose a widening of the understanding of the drone decision-making process. It also aspires to widen the scope conditions for theory to the empirical context of drone use in the War on Terror. By analyzing public speeches and remarks, the study looks at the cognitive and strategic dimensions to ascertain if analogies referencing the cognitive dimension are present and if they indicate analogical reasoning during the drone decision making process. The research question is as follows: Did President Obama use historical analogies when justifying the continued use of weaponized drones in the war on terror, and if so, how?

1.3. Delimitations of the study

This study focuses on historical analogies in public speeches by President Obama, to analyze if they indicate that analogies may have played a role in the decision-making process for the use of drones. The study looks at the years 2009 through 2016, the years Obama served two terms as President of the United States. The choice to include both Obama's presidential terms, rather than a shorter time frame, was to ensure that any significant changes in the usage of analogies could be accounted for in the analysis.

While there are many potential explanatory factors for decision making behavior, this study chose to focus only on historical analogies to maintain a narrow enough scope for the study to be performed in a detailed and rigorous manner. Thus, aiming to achieve further insight into whether analogical reasoning may play a part in the drone decision making process. The theoretical background of this study relies on cognitive theory, as this theoretical perspective sufficiently explains the usage of historical analogies by decision makers. The decision to engage with the cognitive/strategic debate within the scholarly field was made as it pertains to the study's objective, to see if historical analogies in this context may serve a different purpose than that which cognitive theory suggests.

Unmanned technology has been developed significantly over the past two decades, and because drones differ in nature from traditional methods of warfare, it is important that studies into all aspects of drone use are conducted, spanning over different academic fields. Much theorizing around drones has been within the field of realism, which most often studies the outcomes of drone use, whereas not much research into the process of reaching the decision to implement

drones, and perform drone strikes has been done, which is why this study looks at this process specifically. This study examines whether it is possible to gain insight into the decision-making process by examining how historical analogies are invoked in drone related contexts.

2. Previous research

This chapter discusses previous research into the field of UCAVs, aiming to shine a light on the research tradition, both in terms of decision making and reasoning behind drone use, as well as the question of drone efficacy. The first section elaborates on why the realist approach of rational cost/benefit analysis is insufficient in explaining drone use from a decision-making perspective. The second section introduces cognitive theory as a complementary explanatory theory, with a focus on the study of historical analogies.

2.1 The realist approach

The realist tradition in international relations states are actors in an anarchist system, where state leaders act on behalf of the state as a whole, to preserve national interest, in accordance with a rational cost/benefit analysis. The perspective assumes that state leaders calculate the least costly/most beneficial routes, ranging from economic to political, and act in a rational and appropriate manner to ensure the gains and losses correspond to the preferred outcome - this is often referred to as a rational-actor perspective (Morgenthau, Thomson & Clinton, 2006:4). According to realists, this cost/benefit analysis is what motivates policymakers when making decisions, as opposed to those who subscribe to theories that assume other factors play a role, such as liberalism or social constructivism².

2.1.1 Deterrence theory

Deterrence theory³ can be seen as a sub theory within the realist field, and in essence assumes that adversaries can be deterred from activity through threats of violence (Wilner, 2015:16; Byman & Waxman, 2002:7). The theory made headway following the second world war, prior to the end of the cold war focusing mostly on nuclear deterrence (Jervis, 1979:291). Post-cold war, the theory has been used to explain the mechanics behind how threats of force, or the use of limited force, as opposed to brute force, can coerce an adversary into a preferred course of action, or deter them from going down an undesirable route (Pape, 1996:13; Schelling, 2008:2). The theory assumes that the higher the potential cost to an adversary's available resources, whether it be a state or non-state actor, the less likely they are to try to pursue their objectives, as they would calculate the risk to be too high (ibid.). Many deterrence theorists argue that the

² See for example Owens & Smith, 2020.

³ As a theoretical concept, deterrence as described by Byman & Waxman (2002), together with compellence forms *coercion*. An in depth discussion on the differences between coercive elements is outside of the scope of this study. For a more in depth explanation, see aforementioned.

logic and mechanisms of deterrence theory is applicable to terrorist organizations, and that states should utilize a deterrence perspective in their counter terrorism strategies (Wilner, 2015:11). Deterrence theory has a number of mechanisms, whereby a state uses different strategies to achieve different results. One such mechanism is often referred to as decapitation. Decapitation, as the name suggests, is the attempt to decapitate an adversary, to remove its highest valuable assets, its leaders, and other people vital to the organizational structure (Byman & Waxman, 2002:72). By doing so, often repeatedly, an adversarial state or organization may become increasingly unstable, as the structure falls apart and there are no leads to guide the organization further (Wilner, 2015:75).

2.1.2 Deterrence theory in counter terrorism strategy

Deterrence by decapitation is in practice most often referred to, both in the scholarly field and in the media, as targeted killings. The phrase is commonly used synonymously with targeted drone strikes, but as Wilner (2015) reminds us, targeted killings can, and are executed without the use of drones, such as the killing of Osama bin Laden. Wilner points out that

Drones are certainly used to conduct targeted killings and may, in fact, greatly facilitate the tracking and targeting of individuals, but they represent one of several ways to target and kill identified militants. It is a mistake, then, to equate all U.S. drone strikes, in Pakistan or Yemen for instance, with targeted killings. (Wilner, 2015:76).

It is important to note this, however, it is common that targeted killings are performed via drone strike, and as such, this section discusses literature that uses the phrase targeted killing where it is evident that these either are, or could be, performed by drone strikes. Byman, a deterrence theorist, argues that targeted killings via drone as a counter terrorism tool works to deter terrorist activity for several reasons. They eliminate safe havens for terrorists, they undermine terrorist communication abilities, and they discourage terrorists from leadership positions, as accepting a leadership position could be seen as a certain death sentence (Byman, 2013). Wilner's 2010 study measuring deterrence in targeted killings in Afghanistan claims that targeted killings do restrict terrorist organizations, and degrade their organization capacity (Wilner, 2010:213). Other authors disagree with this sentiment, claiming that targeted killings can have the opposite effect, creating martyrs out of leaders and strengthening the motivation and increasing mobilization. Hafez and Hatfield's 2005 study on the effectiveness of targeted killings by Israel against the Palestinian uprisings from 2000 to 2004, most of which were

carried out via drone strikes or Apache helicopters, found that they made no significant impact on the militant activity (Hafez & Hatfield, 2005:379). A 2018 study into the efficacy of drones in the War on Terror showed mixed results, where the authors saw evidence of efficacy in Pakistan, but not Afghanistan (Jaeger & Siddique, 2018:695). Jordan (2009) found that decapitated groups had a lower rate of decline than groups in which leaders had not been removed (Jordan, 2009:753).

As these results show, the efficacy is ambiguous. Furthermore, while deterrence theory assumes a rational actor perspective, which as a concept touches on the decision making process, it's theoretical perspective is insufficient to explain decisions related to drone warfare. As this section has shown, much of the argumentation for drones by deterrence theorists argues much more in favor of the expected outcomes, rather than examining the processes of decision making.

2.2 The cognitive approach

To identify other factors that play a role in decisions regarding UCAV use, this thesis looks at the cognitive approach. Scholars within this field originate from various disciplines, first and foremost the field of psychology, but there are plenty of cognitive scholars in the political science community as well. Political psychology challenges the rationalist notion that those in power always act in a rational pursuit of self-interest (Cottam et al., 2010:1). Rather than being fully rational, humans are colored by our need to understand the complicated world we live in, and the way we wish to predict consequences of our own and others' behavior (ibid.).

2.2.1 Studying historical analogies

The cognitive approach centers around understanding how humans process knowledge, and how this process in turn affects how we make decisions in the future. One way we do that is by using analogies, both historical and metaphorical. Analogies work as a type of mental shortcut for us to make decisions, in that we can use a previous experience as the basis for making decisions in a new, similar situation (Kaarbo & Kenealy, 2017:69). If we have previous knowledge of what to expect in a given scenario, we will likely make decisions based on this previous knowledge to achieve the preferred outcome. There are plenty of cognitive studies, both qualitative and quantitative, that have convincingly shown that analogical reasoning plays a part in the cognitive process for humans, for example when describing current matters, during

complex problem solving, or making decisions in their daily lives (Ryan & Bernard, 2003:90; Chan, Paletz & Schunn, 2012:1352; Houghton 1998:281).

To give a brief historical summation of the field of historical analogies, Earnest May's fundamental work *Lessons of the Past: the Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (1973) is seen by many as laying the foundation for the field. May also published another crucial study, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for decision-makers* (1986) together with Richard Neustadt. Neustadt and May, both history scholars, detailed pitfalls of using historical analogies by decision-makers in an attempt to illustrate the dangers of analogical reasoning without proper analysis (Neustadt & May, 1986:4). Robert Jervis brought the discipline forward by stating how the study of historical analogies must also include an information-processing perspective, to understand the *why* analogies are used badly and not just the how (Jervis, 1976, quoted in Ghilani et al., 2017:277). The field continued to expand over the coming years, making its way into several different disciplines. Worth reiterating in this section is the 1992 study by Khong. Khong showed how the uses of historical analogies by American decisionmakers, both in public and private settings, led to several disastrous outcomes in the Vietnam War, and developed a framework to show how analogies function as diagnostic devices for policy makers:

[analogies] (1) help define the nature of the situation confronting the policy maker, (2) help assess the stakes, and (3) provide prescriptions. They help evaluate alternative options by (4) predicting the chances of success, (5) evaluating their moral rightness, and (6) warning about dangers associated with the options. (Khong, 1992:10).

In their interdisciplinary study on historical analogies, Ghilani et al. found that many of the empirical studies done to analyze the use of analogies in decision-making have conclude that the way history is applied in crisis situations often leads to subpar outcomes (Ghilani et al., 2017:276). This conclusion was not drawn not because of the old adage that politicians are bad historians, many politicians are well versed in history, but rather, that they have a tendency to use historical analogies superficially. This lends more credibility to the idea that analogies serve a cognitive function, rather than them being a purely strategic or rhetorical tool. The cognitive aspect of the study of historical analogies is not uncontested - the scholarly debate is still not

in agreement regarding in what sense the use of analogies determine, justify or explain foreign policy decisions (Ghilani et al, 2017:275; Beach, Schäfer & Smeets, 2021:460). This is in this thesis referred to as the cognitive/strategic divide and is explained further in the following chapter.

Decision-makers in the USA have often invoked historical analogies, seemingly as building blocks, within their decision-making in war situations, since at least the end of World War II. Studies include Neustadt & May (1986), Khong (1992), Houghton (1996) and Hybel (1990). The use of historical analogies in relation to the U.S. involvement in the Middle East, post 9/11, has also been studied, particularly from the Bush administration. During the first three years after 9/11, President George W. Bush frequently referenced historical analogies, particularly from World War II, in relation to the World Trade Center attacks (Noon, 2004:339). Ångström (2011) mapped out the use of various historical analogies by Bush in public statements and found that there were four perspectives that dominated the discourse on the War on Terrorism. The war was made understandable by comparing it to the four themes - the Crusades, the Vietnam war, the Cold War, and the Second World War (Ångström, 2011:255). Priest shows that both Bush and Obama have frequently deployed the Vietnam analogy, when referring to the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan (Priest, 2013: 540). Miller's study on the War in Afghanistan showed that particularly the Vietnam War, the Soviet-Afghan War, and the British-Afghan war were influential in U.S. decision-making throughout both the Bush and Obama presidencies (Miller, 2017:453).

As within any research field, there are disagreements on what the studies prove or ought to look at. Some scholarly fields study similar patterns as those who research historical analogies, but may refer to them with other phrases, such as 'paradigms' (Roskin, 1974:556). The study of learning by governments is in some ways related to the study of historical analogies, i.e., looking at whether governments 'learn' from lessons of the past. Levy explains learning in this regard as a "change of beliefs (or the degree of confidence in one's beliefs) or the development of new beliefs, skills, or procedures as a result of the observation and interpretation of experience." (Levy, 1994:283). That being said, most scholars would agree that while they share some similarities, the main focal points differ, which is why they cannot be grouped into the same category and are not necessarily in disagreement with one another. Houghton points out however that the difference lies in the interest in individual policymakers; what role

cognitive aspects have in terms of the individual decision-makers, and how that in turn affects policy outcomes (Houghton, 1998:280).

2.2.2 Theories as complementary explanations

One could see analogies as simply being tools in the cost/benefit calculation process. i.e., we have a past experience which we know was too costly and not beneficial, thus, we should take a different route in this novel but similar situation, as we expect that similarity to indicate the potential efficacy of our chosen route. Some would claim that this supports the uses of rationalist perspectives in this case, some would argue that it disproves them entirely, as analogies are inherently subjective, and that they distort the cost/benefit analysis. Attempting to establish a universal truth in this regard is not the purpose for this study, and as the reader will discover in the following section, it is not necessary to do so to arrive at a proof (or lack of proof) for our specific proposition. As such, the author is of the view that the two theories may work to complement each other, rather than to stand in complete opposition to one another. While this thesis does not attempt to ascertain the contributive value or non-value of deterrence theory in the drone decision process, it is also not an attempt to completely dismiss its potential.

3. Theoretical framework

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is no clear consensus on what the underlying reasons are for analogical reasoning by decision-makers, and there is a divide between those scholars who purport that historical analogies serve mainly a cognitive function, and those that state that they serve mostly a strategic or rhetorical function. This concept, in this thesis referred to as the cognitive/strategic divide, is discussed in this chapter, and it is explained why this divide relates to this study. A definition of the phrase historical analogies is also introduced. Further, based on this debate, the analytical framework is introduced, and finally, a section illustrating how this study connects the evidence to the theoretical framework.

3.1 The cognitive/strategic divide in research on historical analogies

The divide in the literature on the study of analogies centers around a psychological/political dichotomy. Some authors contend that analogies are used as cognitive tools, and that they serve an analytical purpose (Khong, 1992:11; Houghton, 1998:282). However, there are researchers, such as Taylor & Rourke that contend that analogies are mainly used as rhetorical tools, to generate reactions from the public or other political entities (Taylor & Rourke, 1995:461). Related to this, Smeeke, Van Acker, Verkuyten & Vanbeselaere (2013) suggest in their study that historical analogies in public speeches can have a measurable effect on voting outcome (Smeeke, Van Acker, Verkuyten & Vanbeselaere, 2013:311). To contextualize, Brändström, Bynander & t'Hart eloquently distinguishes between the two views, where the former “tells us that policy-makers draw upon the past to grasp their situations and discover and weigh their policy options”, whereas the latter claims that “policy-makers use the past opportunistically, i.e., to mobilise support for choices they have already made on other grounds” (Brändström, Bynander & t'Hart, 2004:3).

Ghilani et al. (2018) point out that analogies may serve both purposes simultaneously. A decision maker may be faced with a difficult situation, and draws an analogy as a way to map out the range of options and try to calculate the best chance of success, using a significant event from the past as a guiding tool. This analogy, if used in a public statement, could then serve to elicit a positive response in the intended recipients, i.e. to enable a sense of shared history, belonging, or retribution (Ghilani et al., 2018:281)

When analyzing analogies, the distinction between political and cognitive influence must be made, if the purpose of the study is to attempt to establish whether the analogy has served as a cognitive schema or a political vehicle (Brändström et al., 2004:193). This is, as pointed out by the authors, not always straightforward. If there is available data, one can make comparisons between private and public use of analogies (Khong, 1992:59, cited in Brändström et al., 2004:193). Public speeches and remarks can be compared to, for example, diary entries, internal deliberations, or other material not intended for the public eye. This can provide evidence that analogies that are used both in the public and private spheres go beyond public advocacy, and that they may play a role in the decision-making process (ibid.). A clear-cut differentiation between the cognitive and strategic dimensions of historical analogies may also not always be necessary according to Brändström et al. - "it is not an either or question: cognitive and political functions of historical analogies may go hand in hand" (ibid:206). However, the analytical framework provides a possibility to make an overall prediction and examine our material with the assumptions of the cognitive/strategic divide in mind.

3.2 Defining historical analogies

Definitions on what constitutes a historical analogy is sometimes varying on the discipline from which a researcher adheres to, but a general consensus states that it is the act of drawing parallels from, and observing similarities within, a past and a current situation (Ångström, 2011:225; Houghton, 1996:280). As Khong puts it, a historical analogy "signifies an inference that if two or more events separated in time agree in one respect, then they may also agree in another" (Khong, 1992:6-7). Brändström et al. (2004) draw inspiration from Khong (1992) and May (1973) when defining historical analogies: "an historical analogy is applied when a person or group draws upon parts of their personal and/or collective memories, and/or parts of 'history', to deal with current situations and problems" (Brändström et al., 2004:193).

This study uses a combination of these definitions which is the following: *the act of drawing parallels from, and observing similarities within, a situation in their personal and/or collective memories, and/or parts of 'history', to deal with current situations and problems.* Ghilani et al. (2018) makes an important point when discussing definitions which is worth noting; that historical analogies, sometimes referred to as "within-domain" analogies, differ from the more metaphorical, or "between-domain" analogies. Between-domain analogies can also be found in decision-making processes, in the sense that the former compares and likens two events to

each other, where the latter draws comparisons between an event and a different domain, such as comparing a 9/11 to a chess game (Ghilani et al., 2018:275). This thesis focuses solely on the former, as is standard practice within the field of historical analogy research.

3.3 Analytical framework

In their article on historical analogies and crisis management, Brändström et al. (2004) introduce a conceptual framework, which breaches the cognitive-political divide in the field and attempts to introduce a more nuanced measurement tool. The framework is based on observations of the uses of historical analogies in crisis management, however, the authors make a point to say that the framework is not an attempt to solidify the operationalization of the study of analogies, but rather to provide future researchers with a robust starting point from which to base their analysis (ibid.). The full framework introduces six categories of analogy categorizations, explains their mechanisms and impacts, and shows how to identify analogies according to these categories. This has been adapted in this thesis, and the first two categorizations of the framework are used, namely *Filters* and *Teachers* (see Table 1).

The two chosen categories illustrate the mechanisms behind historical analogies, as well as the cognitive and strategic dimension, which for this study is sufficient. Teacher type analogies, as interpreted in this paper, focus mostly on the political and deliberate mechanisms, i.e. the strategic dimension, and filter type analogies on the cognitive dimension. The remaining four categorizations are thus omitted.⁴ In the original framework, teachers can have a potential cognitive dimension - in this study, that dimension has been omitted, to maintain the opportunity for the analysis to engage properly in the cognitive/strategic divide.

⁴ The reasoning behind excluding the remaining categorizations is as follows: The “Prison” categorization, is that it acts mostly as an extension of the first two, and thus, is excluded on that basis. The “Blind Spot” categorization is appropriate in cases with shorter time frames with a focus on selective analogies, where the researcher examines the use of specific analogies. The “Weapon” categorization means having knowledge of whether analogies are used differently in different settings, such as in public and in private, and as our case is based on public speeches and statements, this is not possible to examine. The final categorization, “Trauma”, is similar to the “Blind Spot” more appropriate for study with a shorter time frame that examines a specific analogy or event. For the full conceptual framework, see Brändström et al., 2004:207

Table 1. Analytical framework

<i>Analogy Characterisations</i>	<i>Mechanisms and impact</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
1. Filter	<i>Mechanisms</i> : spontaneous; cognitive <i>Impact</i> : enabling, i.e. providing a historical 'schema' or 'script' that helps decision-makers to come to terms with a current crisis.	Elaboration of particular historical references in cause-effect utterances by policy-makers in the deliberation process
2. Teacher	<i>Mechanisms</i> : deliberate; cognitive or political (depending on arenas and audiences) <i>Impact</i> : enabling, i.e. providing policy guidelines specifying how to act in the presumed situation.	Elaboration of particular historical references in goals-means statements by policy-makers in the deliberation process and/or in standard operating procedures by executive agencies

Source: Brändström, Bynander & t'Hart, (2004) edited for clarity by the author

3.4 Linking theory to evidence

This section details how the analytic framework is used to determine the types of analogies used in the material, which helps us ascertain their thematic values, thereby linking the material to our theoretical framework.

The analogies are examined in their context, and interpreted against the analytical framework, to determine which of the two categories they belong to. A *filter* analogy is an analogy that suggests it has been acting as a diagnostic tool during deliberations about the situation at hand or decision that is to be made. The analogy could for example have been used to calculate potential costs and benefits or predicting potential success rates of different policy options. Another way in which filter analogies appear, is to explain why the event happened the way it did, and that in hindsight, there was a “filter” that shrouded the policy makers view at the time decisions were made. An example of a filter analogy: “Unfortunately, faced with an uncertain threat, our government made a series of hasty decisions.” (2009e).

A *teacher* analogy elucidates that the use of the analogy is to teach target audiences what lessons have come from it, and how these lessons have impacted policy. The contexts in which teacher analogies are used is often to clarify that the chosen policy direction was because of lessons learned from the historical events, i.e., after they occurred. This is opposed to the filter

analogy, which is often used to discuss the events as they were happening. Teachers, for policy makers, do not act as instructions, but guidelines on how to act in given situations. An example of a teacher analogy: “As we saw in Vietnam and the Iraq War, oftentimes the greatest damage to American credibility comes when we overreach, when we don’t think through the consequences of all of our actions. And so we have to learn from our history.” (2016b).

4. Methodology, method, and material

This chapter explains the reasoning behind choosing a single case research design, as well as introduces qualitative content analysis as the study's methodology. The following section demonstrates why the thematic approach was the most appropriate for this study. The final section details the rationale behind deciding on which material to base the analysis on and describes the subsequent data collection process.

4.1 Research design and case selection

This study utilizes a single case research design. This choice was made for a number of reasons, the first one being the argumentation from scholars such as Yin (2018) and George and Bennett (2005). Yin points out that studying a single case can be particularly useful if the chosen case is unusual or extreme. The War on Terror is undoubtedly unusual, given that there appears to be no other wars or battles similar to the nature of conflict and the way it has been fought. More specifically, the use of drones has not before, nor since, been as extensive as in this case. However, given that investments globally into drone warfare are on the rise, studying drones in this unusual case may contribute to more general knowledge of the phenomenon (Yin, 2018:50). Furthermore, George and Bennett argue that a benefit of using case studies in political science related fields is that it enables the author to further develop understanding of theoretical perspectives (George & Bennett, 2005:18).

Those who caution against the use of single case studies often do so on the grounds that single case studies do not produce knowledge that is generalizable. However, when studies use rigorously applied theoretical perspectives, single case studies can provide important insights into the applicability of these theories on other cases. For example, George and Bennett describe a typical case study in history as “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events” and posit that striving for this type of generalizability is possible in case studies in most academic fields (George & Bennett, 2005:17).

Selecting a case for a single case study such as this one is a task that must be conducted with high levels of awareness and knowledge in terms of the aims and purposes of the study. Seawright and Gerrig (2008) proposes that the case selection ought to be strategically performed, as to making sure to select a case that lines up with the studies intended outcome

(Seawright & Gerring, 2008:295). The U.S.' assumed position as the world's top proliferator of drone technology has for a long time remained unchallenged, but as previously mentioned, this has been changing for some time. Using this case provides us with the opportunity to shine a light on factors of the decision-making process when it comes to drones, to examine the explanatory value of public speeches in cognitive theory of historical analogies and analogical reasoning and engage in the cognitive/strategic divide by examining new empirical material against the analytical framework. The study also expands the scope conditions for historical analogies research to a new empirical context, which is drone use in the War on Terror.

The phrase 'use of drones' in this study refers to the continued authorization and subsequent deployment of targeted drone strikes in the War on Terror. For the sake of continuity and to avoid confusion, the phrase 'War on Terror' is used as an umbrella term throughout the study, referring to the various counter terrorism involvements in which drone strikes occurred, in and surrounding Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Syria and Iraq, during the Obama presidency. The phrase War on Terror is often used to only refer to U.S. involvement in Afghanistan or Iraq, and this is an important distinction, however due to the intricacies referring to these involvements, the decision was made to use the War on Terror to refer to all of them.

4.2 Qualitative content analysis

This thesis utilizes a qualitative content analysis with a thematic approach, similar to many of the previous studies that have been conducted in the field of historical analogies research. In these studies, methodology is often not written out explicitly, but rather, implied throughout the text. However, the methodological approaches taken are strikingly similar to each other. Examples include larger studies such as Neustadt and May (1988), Khong (1992), Miller (2016), Jervis (1976) and Houghton (1996), as well as smaller scale studies, such as Kaarbo & Kenealy (2017), Yossef (2018), and Houghton (2006). The research for this thesis has been conducted with this in mind, and after examining the commonalities between studies, the author has determined that a qualitative content analysis with a thematic approach is the method which is both the most similar to the texts mentioned, as well as the most suitable for this type of study. The literature on this specific method is not abundant, not because it is rarely utilized, but rather, much like in the studies mentioned above, it is often simply implied, rather than explicitly stated (Bryman, 2012:581, Clarke & Braun, 2006:77).

Traditionally, qualitative content analysis has often been conducted in the field of psychology but can be applicable to most disciplines within social studies (Clarke & Braun, 2006:76). The term *qualitative content analysis* is often used to denote a method which relies on precise coding schemes to interpret meaning behind text, occasionally using computer software such as NVivo (Bryman, 2012:557; Essaiason et al., 2017:229). Conducting a qualitative content analysis in this way, often using a predetermined framework based in grounded theory, entails following very strict guidelines for the research processes. However, this paper takes a less structured approach, similar to previous studies in the field.

4.3 Thematic approach

Some argue that thematic analysis mainly is an umbrella term for more specific methodological forms of analysis, such as framing analysis or narrative analysis (Bryman, 2012:580). While that can be the case, Braun and Clarke (2017) suggest that it can serve as an approach in and of itself. They explain that thematic analysis is a *method* of analysis, rather than a *methodology* in and of itself (Braun & Clarke, 2017:297). It functions as an analytical tool rather than a theoretically informed and confined framework, such as framing or narrative analysis (ibid.). Themes can be roughly explained as patterns of meaning, and a thematic qualitative content analysis is a means of analyzing the data of said patterns (Bryman, 2012:580). These patterns are analyzed in accordance with the chosen framework, to explore and identify potential theoretical explanations (Braun & Clarke, 2006:82). When analyzing themes, there are many approaches one can take. Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest eight different factors that researchers can search for in their data: repetitions, indigenous typologies or categories, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and theory-related material (Ryan & Bernard, 2003:89). This thesis looks specifically at analogies as a thematic expression.

The chosen analytic framework enables the study of scrutinizing analogies in relation to their context, to uncover recurring thematic expressions. So, for example, an analogy referencing the Vietnam War may be significant in different ways, depending on what context it is in. If used in a context that suggests it is a filter, the analogy may signify that the decision maker made sense of the current situation by comparing it to or viewing it through the lens of the analogy. If used in a teacher context, it could mean that the policymaker wants the audience to liken a novel situation to that of a collectively remembered past, to make the audience feel as

if decisions made in the situation were warranted. Thus, a thematic approach enables us to investigate potential different dimensions of the same analogy, by looking at which themes occur regularly in relation to which analogies.

4.4. Material and data collection

The data for this study consists of 13 public speeches and remarks and one published op-ed by President Obama, spanning from the beginning of his presidency in 2009, to the end in 2016. The material was chosen on research traditions within the field of research on historical analogies - for the purposes of this study and those similar to it, looking at publicly available data which includes data points that span over a certain amount of time is appropriate to detect potential changes in the use of analogies and the contexts in which there appears. This study focuses specifically on analogies used in relation to drone warfare, and as such, the choice was made to only include material that directly or indirectly references the uses of weaponized drones. This means that speeches regarding the War on Terror, or military or security policy in general that makes no explicit or implicit mention of, or reference to, unmanned warfare has been omitted.

The choice to analyze speeches and remarks made by President Obama only and not other members of his organization was for several reasons. First, it was to enable a rigorous analysis and opportunity to carefully scrutinize the data, and secondly, because the study aims to examine the applicability of cognitive theory and analogical reasoning, and if public speeches can provide empirical evidence for this. Focusing on public speeches also provides opportunity to engage with the strategic/cognitive divide. Public speeches are curated to be suitable for recipient audiences, which makes it interesting to see if there is evidence of the cognitive dimension present. Another reason is that by examining the speeches of one person over a longer time span and in light of the context they were given, the speeches can provide insight into for example, significant changes in how analogies are used.

As has been argued by for example Khong (1992) and Brändström et al. (2004), comparing public material with material not originally intended for the public can provide further insight into the cognitive and strategic dimensions respectively. However, given that this study opted to examine historical analogies over a long time span, a comparative study with that same time frame of the nature discussed by these authors, would have to include large amounts of

classified data, much of which is currently not available to the public. A comparative study on the analogical reasoning regarding a particular event is likely better suited for this. An example of such an event would be the 2011 drone strike that killed Anwar Awlaki, a suspected high ranking Al Qaeda operative, as well as an American citizen at the time of his death. Obama speaks of this instance in a speech on counterterrorism in 2013, giving several examples of terrorist attacks he claims Awlaki was heavily involved in planning (see 2013a). The previously secret documents regarding this drone strike were declassified in 2013, and thus, comparing public speeches in relation to this instance with the declassified documents from within the same time frame could provide considerable insight into analogical reasoning at this time (ibid).

The data gathering was conducted through searching for keywords in the Obama Whitehouse Archives and the American Presidency Project. The Obama Whitehouse Archives contains all archived material from the Obama Whitehouse, and the American Presidency Project is an online database hosted by University of California, Santa Barbara that contains large amounts of data on publicly available documents from American Presidents dating back to 1789. The database also contains a daily compilation of presidential documents since 2009 (The American Presidency Project, 2021). The search terms were chosen through an initial search, to ascertain the availability of relevant material. However, due to the differing nature of the search engines, searching for single words in the White House Archives produced thousands of ultimately irrelevant results. As an example, searching “targeted killing” produces 2465 results, a majority of which being statements not made by President Obama himself, but for example press briefings by the White House Press Secretary. After reviewing the results, the terms and phrases were refined to be more specific, to filter out irrelevant results. Searches were conducted on both search engines, to ensure that no relevant results were missed, however, the search terms differed due to the different natures of the search engines. The refined keywords and phrases, as well as the number of results each search generated, can be found in Appendix I.

Some of the material from the searches were non-related material, such as the example mentioned above, as well as a high number of duplicates - many results showed up in two or more searches, so not all results were scanned in the first selection process. All speeches, commencements, remarks, and statements made by President Obama were scanned for keywords, phrases, and context, those determined to be in any way relevant to the study were

chosen and saved in an excel file. After this first scan, the material was read through again more carefully, filtering out material that was only relevant on a surface level (only containing one keyword, keywords only mentioned in passing, keywords mentioned in an irrelevant context). After the selection of data was finalized, the first step in the analysis process was to read through the material and take note of recurring historical analogies. The second step was to read the material again, but this time taking note of the contexts within which the analogies appear. The analogies were interpreted in accordance with the analytical framework, which means each analogy was examined both by how it was phrased, and in which context it appeared. They were subsequently analyzed according to these findings.

5. Historical analogies and the use of drones

This chapter contains an analysis of the various historical analogies that have appeared in speeches by President Obama during his two terms as president. The chapter is divided into sections for each significant analogy, which is split into two subsections, one for each presidential term. The included analogies are not the only ones that appear during Obama's two terms as President. Other analogies were omitted from the analysis as they are not related to drone warfare, and therefore have no explanatory value for this particular study. Careful consideration has been taken as to not include analogies that at a glance seem to thematically fit with the arguments made in this thesis, if they are not somehow related to drone warfare.

Explicit mentions of drone warfare during the first presidential term is rare in comparison to the second term, but drones do appear in implicit contexts. There are statements in relation to counterterrorism strategy that discuss the increased investment in expanding and investing in modern military capabilities, which would include UCAVs - "We're investing in the 21st century military and intelligence capabilities that will allow us to stay one step ahead of a nimble enemy." (2009b). Statements akin to this quote are regarded as related to drones. The explicit mentions of drone warfare increase during the second presidential term. It is around this time that the media discourse on drones had started to pick up, and the War on Terror was still ongoing, despite the best efforts of the Obama administration.

In 2013, Obama delivered a since then frequently quoted speech on counterterrorism strategy, and this is widely regarded as his "drone speech" (Kaag & Kreps, 2014:39) In this speech, Obama gives his longest and most detailed opinion on the uses of drones in the War on Terror. This speech became somewhat of a turning point for the President in regard to how often and in what contexts drone warfare appears, as he during his second term received more criticism for the drone program, as well as being asked more frequently during press conferences about drone usage (ibid.).

5.1 9/11

5.1.1 First presidential term

Virtually all of the speeches and remarks referencing counter terrorism strategy during the first term of the Obama presidency mention the 9/11 attacks, but mentions are not always in the form of analogies. However, 9/11 does appear as an analogy in some instances. In these instances, 9/11 analogies appear both as teachers and filters. The reasoning behind using this analogy is rather up front. It is the main reason the War on Terror began, and for many, it was the catalyst of change in the way America related to war.

9/11 as an analogy appears often as a teacher in President Obama's speeches and remarks. During a speech on National Security in 2009, Obama states that

“We are less than eight years removed from the deadliest attack on American soil in our history. We know that al Qaeda is actively planning to attack us again. We know that this threat will be with us for a long time, and that we must use all elements of our power to defeat it. Already, we've taken several steps to achieve that goal. For the first time since 2002, we're providing the necessary resources and strategic direction to take the fight to the extremists who attacked us on 9/11 in Afghanistan and Pakistan” (2009b).

The following section of the speech details a number of policy decisions taken after the 9/11 attacks, including the aforementioned quote regarding 21st century military capabilities, indicating that this analogy is to make us understand the gravity of the situation, and to agree that therefore, the decisions that the President discusses are not only justified, they are almost late. The focal point of the teacher analogies is to ensure that the recipient of the analogy grasps just how life-altering these attacks were at that time, and that the policies that have followed after were implemented justly in relation to them.

In an op-ed published in 2011, ten years after the 9/11 attacks, the President recalled the feeling he felt on that day, and urged the nation to remember how it came together as a community afterwards. “This is the true spirit of America. We must reclaim this anniversary — the ordinary goodness and patriotism of the American people and the unity that we needed to move forward together, as one nation.” (2011a), additionally stating that the U.S. should “never forget the

lesson we learned anew 10 years ago” (ibid.). In 2009, at the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention, the President remarked that

Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting. This is a -- this is fundamental to the defense of our people. (2009c)

This analogy tells us, again, that the gravity of the situation means there is no choice but the selected one, because as we can see, if we do not take action, we allow ourselves to be vulnerable against another attack. This statement is followed by a mention of drone use. President remarks on the fact that the way forward against al Qaeda, is through investments in modernizing the military, including “an Air Force that dominates the airspace with next-generation aircraft, both manned and unmanned” (2009c). Remarking that the novelty of this type of war similarly requires innovation in military resources is something that often goes hand in hand with these teacher analogies.

There are many connections to American values that appear related to 9/11 analogies, albeit not always in the immediate context - 9/11 could be the subject of which President Obama speaks, but the mentions of American values are often implicitly connected to 9/11 rather than explicitly, such as when he states that “But I believe with every fiber of my being that in the long run we also cannot keep this country safe unless we enlist the power of our most fundamental values.” (2009b). The President often points to these fundamentally American values, such as, for example, “freedom, fairness, equality, and dignity” (ibid.), as a way to underline both what the War on Terror is fought to protect, and how America should and does always strive to protect them.

President Obama’s uses of the filter analogies suggest that the gravity of the situation led to some mistakes on the part of the Bush administration. In the 2009 speech on National Security, Obama discusses how the 9/11 attacks introduced a new era for American policy makers, and that the decisions that followed were based on fear, rather than on strategic reasoning; “Unfortunately, faced with an uncertain threat, our government made a series of hasty

decisions.” (2009b). He discusses this further in relation to both Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, telling his audience that

(...)the brutal interrogation techniques [at Abu Ghraib] made public long before I was President, the American people learned of actions taken in their name that bear no resemblance to the ideals that generations of Americans have fought for. (2009b)

Analogies such as this appear in the context of regret - the American president at the time was faced with such difficult choices that he unfortunately occasionally made the wrong choice. Here also we can see a connection to American values, and how, in a sense, the horrors of 9/11 clouded the decision makers abilities to act according to these values, such as, for example, the issue with Guantanamo Bay (see 2009b, 2009e).

5.2.2 Second presidential term

The frequency of 9/11 analogies is similar to the first presidential term, however, the context appears to shift from the focus on American values, to a focus on the necessities of the War on Terror and the U.S’ involvement. Many analogies center around the lessons that 9/11 has taught policy makers, such as in a 2014 speech on signals intelligence, when referencing the way globalization and the Internet has created threats previously not known to any policy maker - “The horror of September 11th brought all these issues to the fore.” (2014a). Similarly, later in 2014, he proclaims that “We know all too well, after 9/11, just how technology and globalization has put power once reserved for states in the hands of individuals, raising the capacity of terrorists to do harm.” (2014b). These speeches make explicit mentions of drone warfare, and they are in the context the lesson learnt after 9/11 is that this new threat environment justly calls for the use of drones. “or drone strikes like those we’ve carried out in Yemen and Somalia. There are times when those actions are necessary, and we cannot hesitate to protect our people.” (ibid.).

In the aforementioned speech, the President discusses the criticism that the U.S. government intelligence measures were encroaching on the privacy and civil liberties of U.S. citizens, related to the whistleblower Edward Snowden. The president makes explicit mention to one of the 9/11 bombers, referencing how he had made a call to a “known al Qaeda safe-house in Yemen”, but that the NSA were unable at the time to trace that call to the United States (2014a). This, to show that a lesson from 9/11 was that to prevent further attacks, the government needs

to have access to, for example, metadata that “queried if and when we have a reasonable suspicion that a particular number is linked to a terrorist organization.” (ibid.), and that while the criticism is understandable, it is in the interest of all Americans that measures like these are in place.

Filter type analogies do appear as well. In the aforementioned 2013 speech, he paints a vivid picture of the horrors of the 9/11 attacks - “Thousands were taken from us, as clouds of fire and metal and ash descended upon a sun-filled morning.” (2013a). He elaborates on this by discussing the novelty of this type of war, and how this novelty likely affected the policymakers at the time. “And in some cases, I believe we compromised our basic values -- by using torture to interrogate our enemies, and detaining individuals in a way that ran counter to the rule of law.” (2013a). Again, this is a place where Obama places emphasis on American values, but in the context of how the effect of the attack shrouded American values at the time. Values like freedom and democracy appear more frequently during this presidency, and in both filter and teacher analogies.

It appears that the filters are used to explain why values were overshadowed or policies that contradicted American values were introduced. In a 2014 speech on signals intelligence, Obama stated that the “very real and novel set of threats” meant that “the possibility that we lose some of our core liberties in pursuit of security” (2014a) increased. He also states that “We saw, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, our government engaged in enhanced interrogation techniques that contradicted our values.” (2014a). Again, repeating that the novelty in the situation for decision makers, meant that the outcomes were occasionally less than ideal, because there was no precedent from which to act upon. What follows is a deliberation on government overreach and the intelligence related criticism discussed in the previous paragraph. The president discusses the various aspects of criticism extended towards the intelligence community and both the Bush and Obama administrations, which includes a mention of how this criticism has been influential in the way the President has reviewed the uses of drones against terrorist networks, and that there is a need to examine how to get off the “open-ended war footing that we’ve maintained since 9/11” (2014a).

President Obama uses the 9/11 analogy mostly in a teacher context, and most frequently in the beginning of the first term. This seems to be linked to the decision in 2009 to send 30,000

additional troops to Afghanistan, which he admits appeared in stark contrast to the peaceful foreign policy he had advocated during the election campaign (2009e). The frequent, often emotionally charged analogies that appeared could have served to remind the American public of the horrors of 9/11, so that they would be more accepting towards the continuation of the war.

An important thematic expression throughout was the focus on American values, like patriotism, freedom, democracy, and tenacity, which occurs regularly in the context of 9/11 throughout both terms of the presidency, (see 2009a, 2009b, 2011a, 2013a, 2014b, 2016a). This value seems to suggest that the purpose of the analogies was to bolster a sense of togetherness for the American people. It is also worth discussing the way novelty is contextualized in filter and teacher contexts. When discussed in a filter context, the novelty meant mistakes were made in the process of the event, such as with the many filter-type analogies referencing decisions made by the Bush administration during or closely following the 9/11 attacks. This points to the way that in a sense, novelty served to partly cloud the vision of the decision makers, leading to undesirable outcomes.

Filter analogies seem to indicate that the lack of a clear precedent to use as a guide in decision making during the time meant that decision makers made subpar decisions, implying that analogical reasoning, or rather the lack of it, played a role in the immediate aftermath following 9/11. While this is not directly applicable to decisions regarding drones by President Obama, it is still an indicator that Obama recognizes the cognitive value of analogical reasoning in decision making processes, and that the lack of historical precedence which to compare the issues at hand led to subpar outcomes for the decision makers at the time. When novelty is discussed in a teacher context, it is described more in a way that implies strength and coming together, akin to these important values Obama talks about.

5.2 The Vietnam War

5.2.1 First presidential term

The Vietnam War analogy was frequently put forth by President Bush, oftentimes in various contexts, some of which giving rise to certain criticism, such as accusations of historical revisionism (Priest, 2013:556). As such, it is interesting to examine how President Obama uses this analogy differently. Obama's uses of the Vietnam analogy are less frequent, and sometimes

used to distance himself from the Bush era notion that the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq is like Vietnam (2009e). Another reason why the Vietnam analogy may not be as applicable for Obama as it was for Bush, is the generational effect that Jervis points out (Jervis, 1976, quoted in Mumford, 2015:3).

Obama alludes to potential generational differences perhaps making an impact on collective memory in 2012, when during a speech to Vietnam veterans, he remarked that the 9/11 attack spurred many millions of Americans to join the military, many of them young, because the attack awoke a sense of patriotism in many Americans who had not yet seen such a devastating national tragedy until then (2012a). Yet another reason as to why the Vietnam analogy lost its appeal, could be the many separate contexts in which it appeared during the Bush presidency. It was used both by opponents and proponents of the War on Terror, as well as by President Bush in differing contexts (Ångström, 2011:235).

The Vietnam War does appear in teacher contexts, where we can point to some semblance of justification for the strategic choices made in relation to the War on Terror. In 2009, when referencing the Vietnam war, Obama stated

And finally, if that day in the jungle, if that war long ago, teaches us anything, then surely it is this: If we send our men and women in uniform into harm's way, then it must be only when it is absolutely necessary. And when we do, we must back them up with the strategy and the resources and the support they need to get the job done. (2009d).

Here, this analogy implies that unless we wish to face horrors like these again, we must be prepared to fight this battle with the proper tools, to save American lives. The Vietnam analogy appears to only be used in the teacher-context, which may be an indication that its appearance was strategic, rather than cognitive. Especially so, as the context often was the mistakes made in Vietnam, and that these must not be repeated. Priest argues that while Obama used the analogy less than Bush, the analogy did strike a chord with the American public, enough so that Obama thought it ought to be present in some circumstances (Priest 2013:556).

5.2.2 Second presidential term

As a teacher, the Vietnam analogy appears in the 2013 speech in direct reference to the usage of drones, and how they play a crucial part of the counter terrorism strategy. President Obama, when discussing how any armed conflict means that innocent people will die. He says that America must measure the risks of the loss of American life against the history of “putting American troops in distant lands among hostile populations.” and pointing to how Vietnam led to “hundreds of thousands of civilians died in a war where the boundaries of battle were blurred.” (ibid.). He then points to the thousands of civilian deaths that have occurred since the U.S. involvement started in Afghanistan and Iraq. These statements are referencing the criticism the drone program received for mistakenly targeting and killing civilians. The lesson that Obama is invoking here is that civilians will die, that is the nature of armed conflict, but that neither “conventional military action nor waiting for attacks to occur offers moral safe harbor” (ibid.). An important point to note is that the notion that civilian casualties are an inescapable result of war comes up occasionally when referencing drone strikes as a counterterrorism effort, but without any clear analogical example connected (see for example 2016b).

Another mention of Vietnam is in a context which could likely be interpreted as both a teacher and a filter. In 2016, when referencing U.S. engagement overseas, President Obama says that

History is littered with the ruins of empires and nations that overextended themselves, draining their power and influence. And so we have to chart a smarter path. As we saw in Vietnam and the Iraq War, oftentimes the greatest damage to American credibility comes when we overreach, when we don't think through the consequences of all of our actions. And so we have to learn from our history. (2016b)

Considering the context of interpretation, it could be seen as a teacher in that it references a lesson from history that we must heed. However, if one considers the context, it could also be a filter - the decision makers made a choice at that time that, at the time, seemed right, which was likely the result of some type of misinformation/over eagerness/other factor, and that is in hindsight important to note. For a discussion on ambiguities in interpretation, see section 6.2 on limitations of the study. Regardless of which interpretation is chosen, what is indicated here

becomes clear by looking at the following paragraph, in which the President says that the lessons from history teaches Americans to be realistic in seeing the world as it is. This sometimes means making uncomfortable decisions, but still maintaining a willingness to preserve “a commitment to the universal values of democracy and equality and human rights, and a willingness to stand up for them around the world” (ibid.).

The Vietnam Analogy appears in contexts where it evokes a sense of collective memory of how the horrors of Vietnam must not be replicated once again, and that all must be done to prevent this. While war does entail the death of innocent people, the decision to continue the U.S. involvement overseas must be strategically sound, so as to not put Americans in harm's way unnecessarily.

5.3 Historical wars and presidents

5.3.3 First presidential term

There are several mentions of the historical large-scale wars that America has been involved in, as well as analogies that include quotes and/or actions of historical Presidents. As they appear in such similar contexts, they are grouped into one category of analysis. The wars referenced are the Civil War, the first and second World Wars (hence WWI and WWII) and the Cold War. The decision to exclude the Vietnam War from this section was that it appeared as a stand-alone analogy more often, and often in differing contexts.

Analogies referencing historical wars and presidents appear exclusively as teachers during the first term of the Obama presidency. In the speech on National Security in 2009, there was a heavy focus on the war against Al Qaeda throughout the whole speech. In relation to his conviction that to continue keeping America safe, American values have to be at the forefront of the reason to fight. He expresses that “It's the reason why we've been able to overpower the iron fist of fascism and outlast the iron curtain of communism, and enlist free nations and free peoples everywhere in the common cause and common effort of liberty.” (2009b). In the same speech, when making his final points, he says that “The Framers who drafted the Constitution could not have foreseen the challenges that have unfolded over the last 222 years.” (ibid.), and continues to say that the constitution has carried America through its major wars and conflicts because it “provides a foundation of principles that can be applied pragmatically; it provides a compass that can help us find our way.” (ibid.).

When addressing the way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan in late 2009, the President references how, in the War on Terror, America must “draw on the strength of our values” (2009e) in order to win the war, and that this is what America has always done. America has always, Obama says, tended to the light of human rights, freedom, and justice. “That is who we are. That is the source, the moral source, of America’s authority” (ibid.). This is followed by a reference to President Franklin Roosevelt, and that since his time, “the service and sacrifice of our grandparents and great-grandparents, our country has borne a special burden in global affairs.” (ibid.). This appears in the context of how America has borne the security burdens of the world, and while it has been hard work, it has not been for world dominion or occupation. Instead, “What we have fought for -- what we continue to fight for -- is a better future for our children and grandchildren.” (ibid.)

5.3.3 Second presidential term

Analogies referencing these wars appear most frequently as teachers throughout the second presidential term. In the 2013 speech on counterterrorism, President Obama opens the speech by discussing the past, present and future of warfare, and says that American involvement may not have been desired, but it has been necessary to protect the values that the country hold so dear: “Americans are deeply ambivalent about war, but having fought for our independence, we know a price must be paid for freedom” (2013a). He references the Civil War and the Cold War, and states that the commitment to the American constitution drew those wars to a close, and that the fall of the Berlin Wall seemed to indicate that the 21st century would be calmer, more peaceful, and more democratic (2013a). This was, as discussed above, ended by the 9/11 attacks. Further down in the speech, when addressing this same ambivalence, he quotes James Madison, the fourth president of the U.S., who stated that: “No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.” (ibid.). Here, the protection of American values is juxtaposed against the unwillingness for the President to continue to sacrifice American lives in a war with no end in sight. It is in reference to this, as well as the main point of the speech which was the way American counterterrorism strategy must be adapted to the novel dangers 21st century, that the quote from which this thesis has taken its title: “And to define that strategy, we have to make decisions based not on fear, but on hard-earned wisdom” appears (ibid.).

These analogies appear to be teaching us about the way American values have not only withstood the atrocities of these wars, but rather, has grown from the experiences, and that these are the values that have enabled the U.S. to ultimately win these wars. In 2015, on a speech during a summit on Countering Violent Extremism, President Obama mentions these past wars, as well as the Great Depression, and natural disasters, as evidence that the spirit of American resilience and the commitment to American values has always been strong enough to combat those that oppose it (2015). This is in reference to the challenge ahead, which at the time of giving the speech, was ISIL. He discusses the fact that the complexities of this untraditional enemy poses challenges, but that he was confident that “just as we have for more than two centuries, we will ultimately prevail.” (ibid.).

The analogies imply that despite the novelty of this war, as evident time and time again throughout history, it can be overcome. In a speech on signals intelligence, when referencing how wartime intelligence has developed throughout history, the President references the developments made in the Civil War, the Second World War, and the Cold War, as a way to show that as each of these wars have progressed, they similarly caused novel needs to stay one step ahead of the enemy (2014a). This also leads into references to how 9/11 served to teach America and the world yet another novel lesson. When reading the rest of the speech, it becomes evident that it is a response to accusations of breaches of privacy by American decision makers, which Obama discusses at length. In the conclusion of this speech, he says that the Obama administration welcomes the debate, because it is this type of debate that distinguishes democracy and separates it from authoritarian states like China and Russia (2014a). This leads to another analogy again referencing the Civil War, the Second World War, and the Cold War, where the implication is that precisely because the U.S. always has been in the forefront of democracy, “the world expects us to stand up for the principle that every person has the right to think and write and form relationships freely” (ibid.).

However, it is important to note that American values do appear in contexts related to non-military efforts as well. In a speech at the Air Force Academy, which does center around the fight against ISIL, Obama says that one of the most important elements of American power is how American values are employed in diplomatic processes: “That’s how we won the Cold War -- not just with the strength of our arms, but with the power of our ideas, the power of our example.” (2016a). These analogies show that references to American values are significant

not just to justify the way the war has been fought in the Middle East, but also that there is more to counterterrorism strategy than just the military means. This is another analogy which is difficult to interpret as strictly one of the two types from the framework, see section 6.2.

Historical wars and presidents do not appear in any significant amounts in the filter context. One, in 2014, President Obama mentioned the way in which the U.S. may have rushed into military engagements without considering the consequences. “Since World War II, some of our most costly mistakes came not from our restraint, but from our willingness to rush into military adventures without thinking through the consequences” (2014b). This quote is in reference to the differing opinions on past, current and future military involvements abroad, discussing the mistake of the U.S. overextending itself in military conflicts. The main themes touched upon in relation to these analogies seem to be American values, and American perseverance.

5.4 Significant terrorist attacks beyond 9/11

A group of analogies that did not appear in any considerable amount during the first presidency did occur frequently in the second term, which is significant terrorist attacks against American targets, performed by extremists, throughout American history. Because they appeared so regularly during the second term, it was appropriate to discuss them here, despite the context being within a shorter timespan than the previously analyzed analogies.

As is mentioned previously in the text, the 2013 speech on counterterrorism strategy is the first to explore the subject of drones, and the only one that does so in depth. Analogies of other significant attacks that appear in this speech are therefore in context to the use of drones extensively throughout this speech. President Obama makes mention of a number of these attacks, and reference both attacks on American soil, such as the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995, and some attacks outside of America which killed American citizens, such as the bombing of the Embassy of Beirut in 1983 (2013a). He says that these attacks, if left unchecked, can cause threats to grow. But if dealt with “smartly and proportionally”, they can and should be kept from escalating to degrees resulting in events such as the attacks on 9/11 (*ibid.*). This is the nature of the mentions of significant terrorist attacks beyond 9/11 throughout the remainder of the Obama presidency.

The analogies appear in teacher contexts, seemingly as a way to remind Americans that threats have to be dealt with, or they will escalate. This is also part of the foundation on which the counterterrorism strategy that Obama discusses in this speech rests, and analogies act to illustrate the changing nature of the threat of terrorism, and to teach those who listen that overcoming these takes new thinking, but also, a steadfast commitment to American values and ideals. In 2015, when discussing how the threat of terrorism has changed, President Obama mentions the terrorist attacks in Fort Hood, Chattanooga, the Boston Marathon, and San Bernadino, all of which were seemingly motivated by extremist Islamism, which all took place during the Obama presidency (2015a). What follows is a description on the intended strategy of how to defeat ISIL, and the speech ends with another call to remember the American values that have previously enabled America to prevail in the face of hardships.

Let's not forget that freedom is more powerful than fear; that we have always met challenges -- whether war or depression, natural disasters or terrorist attacks -- by coming together around our common ideals as one nation, as one people. So long as we stay true to that tradition, I have no doubt America will prevail. (2015a)

In 2016 Obama speaks again on the changing nature of the terrorist threat, and that some would rather pull the U.S. out of it's overseas entanglements, such as the War on Terror. "But history teaches us, from Pearl Harbor to 9/11, that oceans alone cannot protect us. Hateful ideologies can spark terror from Boston to San Bernardino." (2016b). This to say that ignoring threats in the Middle East is futile, and that they will grow to present a real threat on American soil. The Boston Marathon bombing analogy appears again as a teacher, to remind "the American people once again of what Boston taught us: How to be strong. How to be resilient. In the face of terrorists who try to spread panic, we have to refuse to give in to fear. We have to stay true to our values of liberty and diversity and openness." (2016a). The context here being that the American people, and their resolve, and the American way of life, cannot be destroyed by terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda and ISIL (ibid.).

Later in 2016, he says that "the pain of those who lost loved ones in Boston, in San Bernardino, in Fort Hood and Orlando, that pain continues to this day." and explains that while we cannot stop terrorists in their tracks, a smart strategy and staying true to American values is what is

going to work in the long run (2016c). Later in the speech, he references back to these attacks, and refers to terrorists such as Dzhokhar Tsarneyev, the Boston Marathon bomber, to show how America can and does prosecute terrorists in a court of law when possible. This is relevant, as he shortly after this he references the need for drone strikes in relation to those terrorists that the U.S. can't get to. "terrorists seek out places where it's often impossible to capture them, or to count on local governments to do so. And that means the best option for us to get those terrorists becomes a targeted strike." (ibid). Here, the terrorist attacks appear in the context of necessity - America does what it can at home but will not shy away from removing terrorists from the battlefield elsewhere.

Thematically, the focus on American values stays consistent throughout Obama's second presidential term. There is also a focus on necessity - as we have seen, the terrorist threat needs to be dealt with, or it will escalate.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Historical Analogies and the War on Terror

This study has analyzed President Barack Obama's use of historical analogies in reference to the uses of drones in the War on Terror. The results show that Obama did use historical analogies in speeches and remarks when discussing the use of drones, and that these analogies were used more often in a teacher context than a filter context (see Appendix II). This indicates that, according to the analytical framework, analogical reasoning has likely been used more as a strategic tool post-decision making, than a cognitive tool during decision making. As such, it appears that a statement regarding the definitive cognitive aspects of analogies in relation to drone use by President Obama is difficult. This does not mean, however, that there are no signs of analogical reasoning present throughout the analyzed speeches. The presence and context of the filter analogies used indicate that the Bush administration appears to have struggled with decision making post 9/11, due to the lack of historical precedence. This indicates that analogical reasoning would have been a part of the process otherwise and would have guided decision makers to make a better decision. While this does not give us a clear-cut answer in regard to the decision-making process of drone use specifically, it does indicate that President Obama recognizes the value of analogical reasoning. The novelty of 9/11 meant that it was a lack of similar events from which to draw conclusions on ways forward that inevitably led the decision makers at the time to make decisions that in hindsight proved to be detrimental.

This has a number of implications for theory. The study shows that it is possible to find evidence depicting historical analogies in both the cognitive and the strategic dimension by analyzing public speeches and remarks. It also shows that engaging in the cognitive/strategic divide is important for scholars analyzing historical analogies, as it appears analogies can serve both purposes, and thus, neither dimension should be discarded. This is of value to the field as a whole, as it shows that engaging in the divide may actually provide important context that otherwise would be missed. Furthermore, the study has expanded the scope conditions for theory regarding historical analogies to a new empirical context, which is drone use in the War on Terror.

In terms of the explanatory power of analogies in furthering our understanding of the drone decision making process, the answer is less concise. It appears that analyzing analogies in public speeches over long stretches of time does not provide enough insight into the specifics of the decision-making process to make any conclusive statements. For example, President Obama indicating that he considers decisions post 9/11 were failures due to the lack of historical precedent, is not enough to state that historical analogies can be said to be conclusively influential in the drone decision making process. That being said, the study does provide an insight into what President Obama seems to consider to be thematically important analogies when discussing drone use, as well as show that the context and frequency of analogies has changed throughout his two terms as President.

The public and academic discussions on drones are not set to disappear anytime soon. Those who are skeptical towards the concept of a future with fully autonomous weapons, scholars or not, ought to engage in this debate now, as the future seems to already be here. Action in both the academic and public sphere is needed to ensure that we as a society fully understand the consequences of the widespread proliferation of weapons that can act without human intervention.

6.2 Limitations and suggestions for further research

The analytical framework was useful when distinguishing between the two types of analogies, but as mentioned several times in the text, there were occasions when analogies did not comfortably fit in the framework. This was either because they were too ambiguous, or because they could be interpreted to fit both analogy types. While these were not abundant in numbers, and the majority of the analogies did fit quite comfortably in either the filter or teacher context, it is still important to note that this could limit the applicability of the framework in similar contexts and might therefore benefit from being adapted to be more specific in future studies.

While there were analogies present, analyzing data solely from public speeches and remarks provides less opportunity to examine the cognitive aspects of analogical reasoning by decision makers than when compared to other data points. In potential future studies of a similar manner, data from a wider variety of sources, including internal deliberations, and other types of material that at the point of creation was not intended for distribution to the public could be used to illustrate the potential cognitive dimension of analogical reasoning more clearly. That being said, one should also not underestimate the value of thorough analysis of public material,

which as this study has shown can still provide valuable insights into the frequency and contexts where analogies are used by public officials and decision makers.

Another suggestion for further research comes from the standpoint of theory: while this study indeed compared realist and cognitive theoretical assumptions, it did so partly to challenge the somewhat prevailing norm regarding the study of drone use, not draw any conclusions regarding the value or non-value of deterrence theory in relation to drones. This would, within the realms of this study, not be successful, as their theoretical assumptions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. As such, it is in my opinion impossible to try and ascertain which theory then “best” explains decision making and drone use. On the other hand, it is possible to view cognitive theory and deterrence theory as complementary.

Further research into the use of drones could benefit from expanding the scope of the theory to include perspectives from different fields. More research in general into the drone area is of course encouraged. For example, research that can provide a comprehensive way to measure drone efficacy is needed, as well as further research into other factors of decision making and the use of drones.

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Appendix I

Obama White House Archives	
Search term:	Number of results generated at time of search:
drones	232 results
remotely piloted aircraft	25 results
unmanned aerial vehicles	44 results
president remarks al-qaeda counterterrorism	410 results
president statement al qaeda counterterrorism	433 results
president remarks drones counterterrorism	124 results
president statement drones counterterrorism	156 results
al qaeda counterterrorism drones	77 results
	Total: 1545 results
The American Presidency Project	
terrorism+drones	20 results
terrorism+unmanned	11 results
counterterrorism+drones	20 results
war on terror	128 results
	Total: 179 results

Appendix II

Number of analogies analyzed: 34

Total amount of teacher analogies identified: 28

Total amount of filter analogies identified: 5

Total amount of ambiguous analogies identified: 2