

“full-spectrum dominance.” It is therefore not necessary to accord the Predator Empire suffocating omnipotence, dominance, or completion in order for the category to shed new and critical light on the geopolitical and ethical-political dynamics of mystified technologies like drones.

Predator Empire stands apart from most of the proliferating literature on militarized drones. In contrast to the technocratic, state-centric, and tactical character of the journalistic, juridical, activist and geopolitical commentaries on drone war, Shaw directly engages the philosophical, existential, and civilizational implications of the ever-increasing technological capacity for surveillance and tracking that targets specific individuals and population groups. Another welcome contribution of the book lies in its style and grace. Constructing a message with the potential to proliferate a critical and materialist understanding of state violence beyond the confines of academia is one of Shaw’s major commitments. To this end, he has also produced *Remote: A Documentary about Drones and Humans* that supplements the book and that has great pedagogical potential for a range of publics, especially students (<https://vimeo.com/222209662>).

I have no doubt that Shaw would be delighted if the book should spur further research on the materiality of state formation. But the book is written in a way that it has the potential to go beyond the research community to shape broader conceptions of the imbrications of war, policing, surveillance, and technologies of control. As such, the pairing of Shaw’s *Predator Empire* with *Remote* is a model for geographers who aim not only to reshape research agendas in their field, but also to engage broader and more diverse publics.

2. Delineating Predator Empire

2.1. Susan Roberts

This is an important book. In it, Ian Shaw considers the rise of drones as key technologies of state violence. He carefully identifies what is happening in the contemporary moment, and then draws out the precedents, meaning, and implications of current trajectories. The basic question Shaw is concerned with is posed early on in the book: “What does it mean for humans to exist in an era of dronified state violence?” (p. 5).

In terms of identifying the present moment, Shaw takes an historical approach, providing a detailed, yet readable, account of the various initiatives, programs, and plans that enabled the drone to become a key technology and weapon. To describe the contemporary situation, Shaw develops this idea of the Predator Empire. He writes: “Predator Empire is a concept used to describe the contemporary and future US national security state, an arrangement of military power, state violence and unprecedented surveillance technology” (p.241; see also p. 6).

And, in terms of the implications of Predator Empire, Shaw shows how it is a socio-technical formation that is connected to totalitarianism—a new type of totalitarianism characterized by social control (rather than discipline) and machine intensive state violence (rather than labor intensive). It is also a distinctively US empire.

One of this book’s major strengths is that Shaw is not afraid to draw out the big picture implications of life under Predator Empire. To do this, he builds on theorists such as Hannah Arendt — particularly to consider some of the frightening political implications, and on Peter Sloterdijk, to help understand how the drone can facilitate geopolitical enclosure of the skies, effectively saturating human life and imprisoning people in “sociopsychic spheres” (p.55). Nonetheless, there seems to be some tension as the overarching depictions of the state of “humanity” and the discussion of all-encompassing planetary logics risk losing sight of the geographies

of Predator Empire.

In many parts of the book, Shaw does draw out the formative significance of the geographies of Predator Empire. For example, he delineates the key role of The Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, a region subjected to particularly intense US drone surveillance and strikes. Citing the traumatic effects of living under drones, and how everyday behavior is affected, Shaw shows how the “biopolitical logic of drone strikes, is not simply death, then: it is the ordering and policing of the lifeworld” (p. 126). Nonetheless, Shaw sees the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, and presumably now Yemen, as proving grounds for an evolving “topological empire in which space is unilaterally erased by technics” (p. 129).

Claiming that “[t]he world is being remade into a battlespace” (p.112), though, can be a generalization that glosses over the highly differentiated human experiences of state drone violence. Likewise, thinking of the “dronification of the human condition” in the singular (p. 28) may be too abstract to acknowledge, and also to consider the significance of, the changing geographical intensities of drone deployment around the world.

Shaw writes of the human condition under drones as characterized by “anxious, hypersecured, atomized individuals: soothed and yet ever distressed by the buzz of police robots swarming the skies” (p. 28). But this is not a generic human condition, is it? As Shaw’s own emphasis on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan reveals, there is an enormous, and highly significant, difference between life under drones in that part of the planet, and life under drones in the US, say. By invoking the language of empire, Shaw recognizes that the asymmetries, the inequities, and the power logics, built on historic spatialities of empire and hegemony, while enabled by new technologies, are still significant, and even constitutive or formative, of the vastly different human conditions (plural). And overly abstracting or generalizing does not just occlude the spatiality of present-day trajectories, it also misses acknowledging and analyzing the important multiple racialized geographies at the heart of Predator Empire.

Having said this, Shaw does emphasize that Predator Empire is itself characterized by a spatio-organizational shift from “Base-world” to “Droneworld.” As drones change the ways wars are fought, Droneworld relies on a different kind of spatial organization. Fewer giant airbases, for example, and many more smaller distributed bases. Shaw writes of how a “constellation of bases forms the skeleton of the Predator Empire, providing the material infrastructure of targeted killing” (p. 129). Shaw’s overview of what is happening in Africa is extremely interesting in this regard. He points out that there are a few key bases in the region, with multiple smaller facilities, networked together in an “architecture of hubs and spokes, of drones and special forces” under construction, and that this “aims at eradicating the tyranny of distance and brings the dangerous splinterlands of the continent under the watchful eyes of robots” (p. 141). This architecture is supported by communications infrastructure, from satellites to fiber-optic cables, from roads to quays, and represents considerable investment. The “kill-net” or, in other words, “the multiple, dispersed, and violent infrastructures that have snapped together in the Predator Empire” (p. 195) is simultaneously thus a technological, geopolitical, and geoeconomic phenomenon.

This book’s focus is resolutely on the technological (though Shaw prefers to write of “technicity”) and the political. To a degree, the “economic” is treated as a separable (though see p. 33) and subsidiary in terms of the analysis presented. This focus is part of the book’s brilliance — for example in pointing us to the significance of the machinic in the emergence of “rule by nobody” (pp. 24–25) or the possibilities of a “more-than-human geopolitics” (p. 39). But the relative neglect of the economic or political

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