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## In Praise of Drones

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|  
March 10, 2011

[Malou Innocent](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

It is hardly shocking and should come as no surprise to anyone following U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan that a Pakistani general [recently praised](#) <sup>[3]</sup> the U.S.-led program. After all, the drones take off from military bases inside Pakistan, so it's likely that at least some people in the Pakistani government and military endorse the program.

Georgetown Professor [C. Christine Fair](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, whom I greatly admire and respect, has conducted extensive research throughout Pakistan and [found](#) <sup>[5]</sup> that drones have been effective and are even quite popular in the tribal areas.

Point taken. My concern, however, is that there has been little evidence to suggest that drones—a piecemeal, tactical effort—will alter the Pakistani security establishment's support for Islamist proxies. After all, whether the Pakistanis like drone strikes or not, [they continue to support](#) <sup>[6]</sup> militants killing U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan.

In short, massive aerial bombings did not win the war in Vietnam, and it's not going to change the bigger picture in South Asia. Drones strikes certainly have crippled al Qaeda “central’s” global capabilities. But bombing terrorist sanctuaries does not tell us what course of action is most prudent for eradicating the underlying motivations and conditions that lead to harboring terrorists.

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[1] <http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=250&username=nationalinterest>

[2] <http://nationalinterest.org/profile/malou-innocent>

[3] <http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/09/most-of-those-killed-in-drone-attacks-were-terrorists-military.html>

[4] [http://home.comcast.net/%7Echristine\\_fair/index.html](http://home.comcast.net/%7Echristine_fair/index.html)

[5] [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/28/drone\\_wars](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/28/drone_wars)

[6] <http://tribune.com.pk/story/22875/pakistans-support-to-insurgents-must-end/>