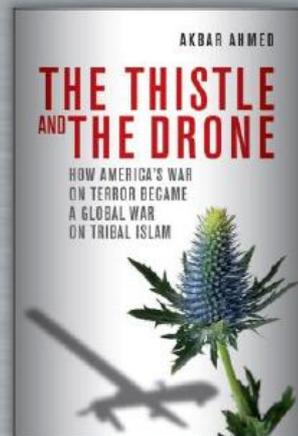


THE THISTLE AND THE DRONE

Committee Room 3
House of Lords
Parliament Square
London SW1A 0PW

27th June, 2013
Thursday
18:30 – 20:00



CONTENTS:

- ➔ Good Title, Well Written, Timely Book
- ➔ Damage Done by Drones and War on Terror
- ➔ Way forward and conclusion
 - call by UN to halt military robot development
 - use of International Law to stop killing by drones
 - start a global campaign to stop the use of drones
 - follow Dr. Ahmed's call for a compassionate society

Good Title, Well Written, Timely Book

Akbar Ahmed's book, *The Thistle and the Drone* examines the relations between United States and the Muslim world. The book has a good title, well written and timely. It is a fascinating read and a vivid description of how tribal communities of Pakistan and many other countries live, interact and have their own codes of honour. An invaluable study of tribal culture and society and their way of life which survived for centuries till war on terror set in. The book brings into open the fact killing people is not surgical strikes or collateral damage but it is the emotional suffering of real people who have lost one of their dear ones, son, brother or a sister.

The book explores the War on Terror by describing life in Waziristan (dubbed as the most dangerous place on earth) and through three dilemmas; Osama bin Laden (Balancing Tribal and Islamic Identity), Musharraf (Balancing Center and Periphery) and Obama (Balancing Security and Human Rights). Through reading these chapters, it becomes clear that it is more of a war on tribal Islam with devastating effect on the tribal communities under the pretext of the War on Terror with horrendous consequences for innocent civilians caught up in their daily activities or attending funerals or weddings. The final chapter of Dr. Ahmed's book has given solutions for building a compassionate society, which if followed can bring sanity to this horrendous and intractable issue.

Damage Done by Drones and War on Terror

I am going to talk about the Damage done by drones and War on Terror which is one of the main subjects of the book and what we can do to stop governments using drones as a tool of warfare.

It is estimated that over 5,000 people have lost their lives in attacks by US and its allies' by drone strikes in the last few years, including many civilians and a large number of children. let me quote from the book on attacks by drones and the nature of violence, "it is the conflict between the centre and the periphery and the involvement of the United States that has fuelled the war on terror. No one is immune to this violence - neither school children nor congregations in their houses of worship. Battered by military or drone strikes one day and suicide bombers the next, people on the periphery say, "Every day is like 9/11 for us" "

Killing innocent people by drones is a war by another name. War on Terror gives Military Industrial Complex an excuse to increase its military spending by manufacturing and using the latest high tech weapons to conduct wars. It is

hunter-killer Reaper drones today which will be replaced by warfare by robots in the future.

The U.S. permits the president and military leaders to create a Kill-List of people who - with no due process, no trial and no evidence - are selected and killed, and majority of those killed by drone strikes are non-combatant civilians.

The strange paradox of killing of unsuspecting targets on the ground from thousands of miles away is the fact that the US drone strikes in Pakistan have the quiet approval of the Pakistan army, as proven by Wikileaks. The Pakistan military receives a lot of money in the form of direct military aid but also lucrative contracts for the waging of this secret, undeclared war from the US. This is not just true of Pakistan but also Yemen, Somalia, Libya and some other countries. The Obama administration has used drones to execute not only foreign nationals but US citizens including Al-Qaeda leader Anwar al-Aulaqi.

So what are the ways we can stop this remote control killings. I advocate four ways:

- call by UN to halt military robot development
- use of International Law to stop killing by drones
- start a global campaign to stop the use of drones
- follow Dr. Ahmed's call for a compassionate society

Call by UN to halt military robot development

A recent call for ban on use and development of drones has been called by United Nations. "War without reflection is mechanical slaughter," said Christof Heyns, the United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

"A decision to allow machines to be deployed to kill human beings worldwide, whatever weapons they use, deserves a collective pause," he told the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Preparations to introduce armed robots raise "far-reaching concerns about the protection of life during war and peace," Mr. Heyns said in a report on lethal autonomous robotics he submitted to the council. "This includes questions of whether robots will make it easier for states to go to war."

Let us publicise the fact that UN is calling for a moratorium on use and manufacture of drones as UN is bound by its own Charter obligations article 2 (4)

which expressly forbids interference in the internal affairs of states on any grounds: "All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state."

Way forward and Conclusion

It is unprecedented that the US president has been given carte blanche to carry on killing people with drones without any major challenge either in the US Supreme Court or in the International Criminal Court as it is illegal, unconstitutional, intrusive and undemocratic.

As a peace campaigner, I believe that we citizens of the world have a Right to Peace. Drone attacks and false flag of War on Terror violates our basic human rights to peace and to live with dignity. And we need to work together to achieve it, no matter what society and country we live in.

There are campaigns to stop the use of drones in US and UK, however, what we need is a coordinated global campaign to build up the momentum and let our governments know that we will not allow the use of remote control machinery to kill people which is unethical and immoral. In Pakistan, Afghanistan, and cities in US and UK have staged mass protests against drone strikes.

Let me conclude by quoting from the book, explained beautifully by Dr. Ahmed in the Chapter, How to Win War on Terror, "The test is to see a common humanity in the suffering of others. If people can rise above tribe, race, and religion to reach out to others not like them, it will save humankind in the twenty-first century. It is a daunting task. Perhaps it is necessary to seek guidance from our ancestors and apply their wisdom to the present time. If the world is to become safer, more harmonious, more compassionate, then both the non-Abrahamic and the Abrahamic societies have much to offer. The path to nonviolence and peace shown by Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist sages, the lessons of the great Guru Nanak of the Sikhs to embrace all humanity, the knowledge of the Jewish savants, the commandment of Jesus to love one another, and the exhortations of the Prophet of Islam, known to his followers as "a mercy unto mankind," to express compassion at all times - all may be combined and reduced to one universal shibboleth: to go out and "heal a fractured world" - tikkun olam."

By writing the book *The Thistle and the Drone*, Dr. Ahmed has done a great service to humanity. I highly recommend all of you to buy the book, read and act on it. Thanks for listening.

Notes:

1. Akbar Ahmed, *The Thistle and the Drone*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C. 2013
2. Vijay Mehta, *The Economics of Killing*, Pluto Press, London 2012
3. Nick Cumming-Bruce, U.N. Expert Calls for Halt in Military Robot Development
4. Francis A. Boyle, *Destroying Libya and World Order*, Clarity Press, 2013

This speech can be downloaded from www.unitingforpeace.com

Please watch 4D for World Peace film:

“Change the World” - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9GEK4FFrXk>

And *The Economics of Killing* Book Launch at Hilton London Euston:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LISJZEECvrE>

Bio - **Vijay Mehta** is a renowned author, international speaker and global activist for peace, development and human rights. He is the chair of Uniting for Peace (www.unitingforpeace.org) and Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity (www.fortuneforum.org).

Working since 1979, Uniting for Peace is a non-profit organisation devoted to creating and promoting a global culture of peace, nonviolence and poverty reduction. The flagship campaign of Uniting for Peace is called 4D for World Peace. It is campaign to create global frameworks for taking actions on interconnecting global issues of disarming and demilitarising the world and the savings thus achieved to be deployed for development and democracy.

Fortune Forum was founded by his daughter Renu Mehta. Fortune Forum held summits (2005 and 2006) where Former US President Clinton, Former US Vice President Al Gore and Actor Michael Douglas were keynote speakers. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage.

Vijay Mehta's books include *The Economics of Killing* (2012), *The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future* (2006), *Arms No More* (2005) and *The United Nations and its Future in the 21st Century* (2005).

He has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Ajjak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Sunday Times, Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

Vijay Mehta is the recipient of the Global Indian Karmaveer (Action hero) Puraskaar (Award) by iCONGO (International Confederation of NGO's). He is now a noble-laureate 2012 –

2013 of the iCONGO team of advisors and mentors (www.icongo.in). It is an award for outstanding luminaries working for peace and social justice.

Prof. Vijay Mehta has been appointed as a fellow of the New Westminster College, Province of British Columbia, Canada in 2013.

Vijay Mehta's new book "**The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels Wars and Poverty in the Developing World**" is published by Pluto Press (UK) / Palgrave Macmillan (USA) / Amazon (Worldwide). For reviews and endorsements of the book, please visit: www.theeconomicsofkillling.org

"Vijay....a long standing activist for peace, development, human rights and environment"
The Sunday Times Magazine, London 1st February, 2009

"Vijay Mehta lends intellectual credibility to the project and wrote 'The Fortune Forum Code for a Sustainable Future', a sort of manifesto that will underpin the group's future activities."
The Independent, London 26 September 2006