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## REVIEW

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### OF THE BOOK: WAR OF THE DRONES

*By: Javier Jordán y Josep Baqués*

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**D**rones have earned themselves a privileged place in general news due to the attention afforded them by the media, which is constantly disseminating stories that grab attention, spark debates and fuel analyses on the role drones play in the present and immediate future. And this attention is not confined to the military field; it ventures into other territories, such as the economy and business partnerships in the sector we continue to call “new technologies”, despite its maturity and consolidation. It therefore caught our attention when Google reached an agreement to purchase the drone manufacturer, Titan Aerospace, for an undisclosed sum that is being kept top secret.

In this context of attention, concern, innovation and science that is not fiction, we find ourselves with a very striking title: “Guerra de drones” (War of the Drones) and the even longer and precise sub-title: “Política, tecnología y cambio social en los nuevos conflictos” (Politics, technology and social change in new conflicts), co-written by Professors Javier Jordán and Josep Baqués and published by Biblioteca Nueva.

Under this title and sub-title, we are presented with a very broad and accurate view and insight into a process in the making: the automation of armies. The face of war has changed with the advent of new machinery and new technologies that have been permanently incorporated into warfare. Addressing a process that is still in the throes of implementation and likely to have far-reaching consequences is always a big risk because the analytical elements needed to carry out an in-depth analysis from the right perspective are not available. The authors, however, took up this challenge, got

it right and produced a comprehensive work. This is a well-crafted book, supported by rigorous sources of information; it raises interesting debates and firmly defends its stances.

The historical overview of “drones” is entertaining, accurate and one of the highlights of the book. In addition, it has been very well contextualised in relation to military needs and the framework of political requirements. Technology, politics and militia have been dealt with separately, but are presented from an integrated perspective.

The work is set to become a source of reference for anyone wishing to learn about the art of military robotics and anxious to see if it will play an increasingly important role in future combat missions. Professors Jordán and Baqués give a very comprehensive account of what is happening; precise and prudent, they are cautious when they talk about the future.

As professors of political science, it is inevitable that they raise an academic question that also has historical and conceptual relevance: are we looking at a revolution and, if so, what kind of a revolution?

Without a doubt, the new technology assessed in this book, that is to say, unmanned vehicles, is a military technological revolution because of the obviously high level of innovation; and it may well be set to bring about a socio-military revolution, to truly revolutionise military affairs. Indeed, the two authors are convinced that it constitutes a socio-military revolution.

The work is firmly grounded in thorough and detailed knowledge of the use of drones in Pakistan in recent years; a fact that enabled Bin Laden to be monitored during his daily walks in the large courtyard of his residence. Chapter III, entitled “Los drones contra Al Qaeda en Pakistán” (Drones against Al-Qaeda in Pakistan), is what I would describe as the “field work” on which the work is grounded and is a magnificent example of the rigour that characterises the entire book.

A ten-year military strategic bombing campaign, in which the CIA was the enforcement arm, is analysed. The authors voice no opinions on the effectiveness of HVT (High-value target) as a means of countering terrorism because of problems of a methodological nature. However, they are emphatic that drone attacks on Al-Qaeda’s core network have been decisive in debilitating the organisation’s operations.

It would be a mistake to approach this book thinking it will provide answers to the many questions raised in relation to this new ground-breaking technology; what it does, however, is help the reader come up with his own questions, issues that are likely to be the focus of future discussions: Would armed robots be able to carry out military campaigns from start to finish? Will robots have full lethal autonomy one day? Is it possible to design ethical robots?

There are a great many questions open to debate and further development, as the reader will discover as this exciting and very current work unfolds, because drones are

here to stay, even though this may lead to a blurring or even a breaking down of the barriers between humans and robots.

The reader may find himself wishing that the authors had gone into more detail in the political analysis and ethical debate; this, however, is not the goal of the book and it cannot therefore be considered a shortcoming.

The future of military robotics is a blank page and the debate on the use of robots has only just begun. As a work that aims both to synthesise and explore new lines of enquiry, “La guerra de drones” is a must-read.

