

The True Identity of America's Government

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### Abstract

The political system of the United States of America is controlled by a delicate balance of powers between policy makers, big businesses, and the people of the nation. The way in which the system functions is best described as a republic, but four key theories have been developed in order to better explain the actual power structure of the United States: traditional democratic theory, pluralism, hyperpluralism, and elite class theory. This research paper will show which theory best describes how America is governed by examining the relationship between the middle class and the republic, the effect of corporate ownership of the media on the people, and the nation's use of drones as part of its war on terror. Research for this paper includes books, web articles, studies, and documentaries that provide information and data about each of the aforementioned topics.

## The True Identity of the American Government

### **Introduction**

On July fourth 1776, the original thirteen colonies of America declared their independence from Great Britain, and after a hard fought Revolutionary War, the colonies officially became the United States of America with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, creating “the land of the free and the home of the brave.” Displeased with the power possessed by a few in Great Britain, America sought to create a government in which there was not one person with an immense amount of power, but one where the power was shared.

The Founding Fathers decided to create a republic, where the government derives its power from the governed. To avoid a monarchy, the United States created a government where the people elected its leaders. Though the President is the leader of the country, his powers are held in check by the Supreme Court and Congress through a system of checks and balances that prevent any one of these three branches of government from becoming too powerful. The governments of individual states are also designed to be able to have their own powers, separate from federal ones. For example, states can create their own laws that their people have to follow in addition to federal laws that the whole country abides by. The people of each state, and of each city, are also given the power to elect their leaders, or representatives who elect their leaders for them, which further distributes governmental power amongst the people.

Initially, only land owning white men were those in the country that had any real power when it came to government affairs. However, as time went on, African Americans gained the right to vote, as did women. With more people having a say in the actions of the government, the United States became a country that was truly ruled by the people.

Presently, many in the United States are unhappy with the way the government is run. Some argue that many different and conflicting groups influence the way the America is governed. Others state that the United States is ruled by big corporations who influence the actions of key people in power. Some believe that the people of America control the country's government as they have since the beginning. To identify who truly runs America's government, four theories have been developed: traditional democratic theory, pluralism, hyperpluralism, and elite class theory.

Traditional democratic theory states that the people control the United States government by influencing policy makers. This theory argues that all citizens rule by having an equal opportunity to vote, and by effectively using that power to pass legislation that benefits the majority of society. All citizens also have an enlightened understanding of government in order to be able to make the changes necessary for the betterment of nation.

Pluralism is the view that decision making in politics is located mostly within the government, but that non-governmental groups use their resources to exert influence on those making the decisions. Such groups compete with each other for control over public policy by bargaining, compromising, and trading, similar to how businesses make deals and ally themselves with one another in order to increase their profits and better their companies. Under this theory, the groups competing for power each control different aspects of public policy in order to ensure that they benefit matters of their own self-interest.

Hyperpluralism is the theory that argues that too many competing groups spoil the government's ability to govern. Because too many groups have influence over public policies, they are continuously arguing with one another about what legislation should be passed and what

should not. As each group refuses to compromise, fragmentation threatens the government's effectiveness and prevents the government from getting anything done.

Elite class theory states that the United States government is a government for the rich, by the rich. This theory argues that the government does all it can in order to benefit the upper one percent of society, whilst ignoring the lower 99 percent. In this form of government, though the majority of the population may be against some public policies, those policies will still be passed because the upper one percent has enough power to push it through, thus making the government an oligarchy as opposed to a democracy.

Though it is a long held belief that America has a democratic government that works to benefit all of its citizens, it can be argued that the powers possessed by the upper one percent of society, acquired through their control of big businesses, have impacted the way the government functions. These big businesses have gained power over United States politicians and the media, allowing them to manipulate which legislation is passed and what information is given to the people via television, newspapers, and the internet. When politicians become corrupt and the people become misinformed, it creates a government that is no longer ruled by the people, but one that is ruled by an elite few.

### **The Middle Class and Its Relationship to America's Republic**

Around the world, America is known as the "land of opportunity", where a citizen can start at the bottom, but through hard work and determination, can ascend through the levels of society. It is this belief that many call the "American Dream", which is described as a "dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement" (Adams, 1931). For most, the "American Dream"

is to lead a happy life in a nice home, along with a loving spouse, two kids, two cars, and enough money to pay for all of their expenses. In other words, the "American Dream" is not to be in the upper one percent of society, but to be a part of America's extensive middle class.

According to Gallup Polls, 55 percent of Americans define themselves as middle, or upper middle class citizens, causing the middle class to be an integral part of America's economic and political systems (Dugan, 2012). The middle class is of great economic importance because it comprises the majority of America's workforce, and provides a stable consumer base that drives productive investment, creating a strong economy that comes full circle to benefit the middle class and increase its strength (Madland, 2011a). When the middle class is strong, it in turn leads to a strong government by ensuring that the government is well-run, thus "increasing citizen participation...and promoting policies for the benefit of all of society rather than special interests" (Madland, 2011b). Simply put, a strong middle class equals a strong America; we cannot have one without the other. Unfortunately, the status of the middle class has greatly deteriorated in recent years.

In order to create a country with a strong economy, the majority of its population must be educated and trained in a field where they can benefit society and obtain financial security. The children of America are encouraged to do so by parents and teachers who tell them they need a good education in order to be successful. "Middle-class parents raise their children to value work and education because they understand their children will be dependent upon work, not capital, for most of their income. They convey to their children the principle that if you work hard within the system and follow the rules, you will get ahead" (Madland, 2011a). By working hard in high school, a student has a good chance of being accepted into a great college with several scholarships to help them pay for their education. Earning college scholarships is very

advantageous for those wishing to further pursue their education, considering that the average student graduates with \$26,600 in student loan debt (Student debt..., n.d.). However, even with scholarships, some families cannot afford to send their children to universities. Without graduating from a university with at least a four year bachelor's degree in this day age, a person will find it difficult to earn a decent income, and will fall below middle class standards, thus contributing to the shrinkage of the middle class population.

Regardless, many are willing to go into debt for the promise of a higher income when they enter America's workforce. Annually, a person with a bachelor's degree will earn, on average, \$23,291 more than a person with only a high school diploma (How much..., n.d.). It is this hope of a higher income that causes college students to believe that they will be able to pay off their college debts with ease. However, they forget that a decent income is needed in order to erase their debt. Beginning a successful career path is not always possible right after one graduates from college, because "unemployment for students with new Bachelor's degrees is [at] an unacceptable 8.9 percent, but it's [at] a catastrophic 22.9 percent for job seekers with a recent high school diploma," (Carnevale, Cheah, and Strohl, 2013).

If a college graduate is lucky enough to begin a career soon after their studies, they become an important cog in the machine of America's economy, of which the middle class is the engine (Phillips, 2009). The middle class is employed by many American based corporations such as Google, Ford, and Apple Computers, where they are responsible for building and creating products that are sold to put money into the American economy. By working for successful companies and earning a substantial income each year, middle class Americans are able to afford products made by these companies. Madland states that,

consumption needs to be sufficient to dispose of the current output of industry in order to make new investments profitable. Investment drives economic growth, but sufficient overall levels of consumption are needed for the private sector to make those investments. This is why...policy-makers seek to stimulate demand in the hopes of raising consumption to levels that encourage new investments...Keynes recognized the importance of the middle class in creating sufficient demand to stimulate growth. He argued that extremely unequal distributions of income depress demand and thus reduce growth (Madland, 2011b.)

These unequal distributions of wealth prove detrimental to the American economy due to the fact that the rich save more and consume less than the middle class. The profits being saved by the wealthy are not recirculated into the economy and therefore do not contribute to economic growth.

In 1981, the compensation of the ten most highly paid CEOs averaged \$3.5 million per year. This figure then jumped to \$19.3 million in 1988 and increased to \$154 million in 2000; adding up to a 4,300 percent increase for that time period (Alperovitz, 2006). Simultaneously, the CEO to worker compensation ratio was 29.0-to-1 in 1978, which grew to 122.6-to-1 in 1995, and finally peaked at 383.4-to-1 in 2000 (Mishel and Sabadish, 2013). However, the increased amount of money that CEOs made, and continue to make, is not being recirculated directly back into the economy. Instead, company executives are saving their money, meaning their wealth is not contributing to the growth of the American economy, and is thus not benefitting the middle class.

These CEOs are supported by conservative politicians who believe that trickle-down economics works best to encourage economic growth because it stimulates big businesses which,



in turn, benefits the general economy. Conservative representatives argue that trickle-down economics enables them to reinvest their profits back into their companies, allowing them to hire more employees which decreases the unemployment rate. It is also argued that lower tax burdens on big corporations allow for cheaper products for middle class consumers.

In contrast, representatives with liberal ideals believe consumerism by the middle class encourages investments which leads to a stronger economy. As such, during the aftermath of the recession of 2008, Liberals lobbied for policies to extend unemployment benefits so that more people would spend money that would re-stimulate the economy. Liberals state that trickle-down economics does not work, arguing that,

[t]ax cuts for the wealthy, primarily those passed by Republicans in 2001 and 2003, lowered rates for the richest Americans to historically low levels - but those cuts were followed by massive deficits and weak job growth, not the economic boom conservatives promised. Anti-regulatory policies helped lead to a predatory financial system that busted the housing market, nearly collapsed the financial industry, and threw America into a recession that largely spared - and even enriched - the nation's wealthiest. At the same time, millions of lower- and middle-class Americans lost jobs, retirement funds, and any hope of economic prosperity in their lifetime. Under 30 years of trickle down policies, wage growth has stagnated even as CEO pay has boomed (Waldron, 2011).

The 2008 economic recession caused the middle class to become extremely weak as many lost their jobs, homes, and retirement funds. This weakening altered the way the American government functioned because the upper class was able to gain political power at the expense of the middle class. Compared to the upper class, the middle class depends more upon public services provided by the government, and as a result, is more interested in promoting policies

that attempt to make the government operate successfully. When the middle class is not strong, these policies fail to be enacted because the upper class tends to use their disproportionate power and influence to secure special favors, thus wasting taxpayer dollars on narrow tax breaks and bank bailouts (Madland, 2011a). As the upper class becomes more powerful, the middle class develops the belief that they have less of an influence in American government, causing a decrease in voter turnout and involvement in politics, which ultimately leads to a government that no longer delivers for the majority of its citizens.

When the middle class becomes disgruntled with their economic status, new politicians are more likely to enter office as participating members of the middle class seek potential solutions for their economic woes. "If the economy is growing strongly and unemployment is low, the incumbent party has a very good chance of retaining office. When the economy is faltering, U.S. voters will more likely vote for change" (Pethokoukis, 2011). As a result, aspiring politicians take advantage of weakened economies to convince the middle class to make such changes, by electing them into office.

During elections, the middle class is targeted most by campaign ads on televisions, newspapers, and street corners. This is because the middle class makes up the most of America's population, and contributes the most votes to elections. The lower class of America believes that politicians do not care about their needs, and that no matter who they vote for, their economic situation will not improve. This results in lower voter participation rates compared to those rates of the middle class. For this reason, politicians do not direct their campaigns towards those in the lower class. At the opposite end of the spectrum, politicians also do not feel the need to direct their efforts towards the upper class. The upper class is responsible for funding political campaigns, and they donate their money early on to whichever politician they agree with, or

believe will personally benefit them the most. By donating large amounts of money to campaigns, the upper class is able to greatly influence who is elected into office. The money they donate is used to pay for many ads and commercials; the more money a campaign has, the more ads it can distribute to the middle class, asking for their vote.

However, in these campaign commercials and advertisements, politicians have a habit of saying whatever they believe will get them elected. Four out of five in a recent assessment believed that politicians say and do anything to get elected, only to do whatever they want once in office (Alperovitz, 2006). This causes many in the middle class to believe that they have little say in the American government, because they suspect that politicians are bought and paid for by the upper one percent of society.

It is true that some actions by politicians in office are often influenced by the big businesses and members of the upper class that financed their campaigns. They convince the politicians to vote a certain way on policies that will benefit those in the upper tiers of society as compensation for their role in the politician's election. Money talks, and as a result, many politicians vote with little regard for the majority of the citizens they were elected to represent.

Currently, the middle class does not believe that they are being well represented by the American government. According to a survey conducted in July of 2013, the disapproval ratings of Congress, the Republican Party, and the Democratic Party are 70 percent, 58 percent, and 50 percent respectively. The additional belief by 82 percent of the middle class, that the economy's condition is only fair or poor, reaffirms the statement that the government functions better in terms of benefiting all of society when the middle class is economically strong (Many say..., 2013).

In order to increase the economic prosperity of the middle class, and in turn, hopefully boost approval ratings and strengthen the government, politicians have proposed several solutions, however, Conservatives and Liberals are unable to see eye to eye on the suggested policies. For example, Liberals propose an increase of the nation's minimum wage. They argue that worker production has increased as the inflation-adjusted value of the minimum wage has declined by 31 percent since 1968 (if the minimum wage had kept up with inflation, it would currently be \$10.50) (Madland and Walter, 2013). By raising the minimum wage, the spending power of the middle class would increase, causing economic growth. Conservatives, however, disagree. They dispute this idea by stating that raising the minimum wage would kill jobs and hurt small businesses, as they would not be able to afford to pay as many workers as they are with the minimum wage below \$10 an hour (Garofalo, 2012).

Both Liberals and Conservatives acknowledge that the middle class is currently in a deteriorated state, and that changes need to be made to improve its status in order to create a stronger America. They know that the middle class is weak because it is suffering economically, but they cannot agree upon which steps to take in order to fix the problem. Liberals argue for higher wages to increase the spending power of the middle class, stating that it would contribute economic growth. Conservatives, however, advocate for more government policies that benefit big businesses. They assert that the profits created by these policies would eventually trickle down to the middle class, increasing their economic strength.

An economically strong middle class is associated with a functional government, but the current plight of the majority of America's population is inhibiting its effectiveness in terms of providing for the needs of people. When the middle class is strong, overall voter participation increases and the American government is looked upon more favorably by the population as

policies that benefit all of society, as opposed to a select few, are passed. However, it is difficult for the middle class to exert their influence upon the politicians elected to represent them if they are misinformed about the government's actions, a problem that is the result of the increasing influence of large corporations in America.

### **Corporate Ownership of the Mass Media**

When creating the Constitution for the United States of America, the founding fathers enumerated specific rights that all citizens are entitled to in the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment identifies some of the most important freedoms bestowed upon American citizens, such as freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom to petition, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press.

Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are the most important rights possessed by Americans when it comes to being knowledgeable about the goings on of the government, as they make it possible for the people to express their opinions and share information without fear of negative consequences. These freedoms are invaluable to the United States media because they allow journalists and news reporters to be watchdogs for the American people, providing them with sources of substantial information about their government's actions (Croteau and Hoynes, 1999).

The policies in place that protect American journalists from backlash allow them to truthfully report information about United States politicians and their ideas; information that some may not want publicized. This aspect contributes to the love-hate relationship between the media and public officials. On one hand, politicians depend on the media to help advance their careers and promote their policies, yet they fear the media's powerful ability to criticize, expose, and destroy (Wilson and Dilulio, 2006). However, though it is the media's job to expose and

criticize, privately owned media outlets have a primary goal of generating profits. Some critics argue that these profit driven platforms of information are often unreliable sources because the need for profit can “lead media outlets to distort the news in order to satisfy advertisers or to build an audience” (Wilson and Dilulio, 2006).

This statement is relatively concerning, considering that 90 percent of the United States media is owned by corporations. In 1983, this 90 percent of the media was controlled by 50 different media corporations, but over the course of 30 years, the number of companies that control the same 90 percent of the media has dwindled to 6: Comcast, News-Corp, Disney, Time Warner, Viacom, and CBS (Snyder, 2010). As opposed to having a variety of news platforms that provide a diverse pool of information, the United States media is now more consolidated.

The dramatic decline in the number of corporations that control the media is the result of mergers between various companies. By merging with one another, corporations are able to broadcast their information through a greater variety of outlets, thus reaching larger populations. For example, the merger that took place between AOL and Time Warner in 2000 gave Time Warner new platforms for its media properties, such as Time, People, Fortune, Warner Entertainment, HBO, and CNN (AOL and Time..., 2012). However, critics argue that consolidation diminishes the number of information providers and can decrease the debate between sources that is essential to a well-functioning democracy.

Whereas diverse media ownership can create the robust and unconstrained debate that allows the best ideas to prevail, the consolidation of corporate media reduces the number of issues raised and the number of voices heard. The voices that do get through are too often subject to conflicts of interest that slant their presentation of the news. Big media companies can use their control of newspapers, broadcast stations, magazines, books, and movies to promote their

own corporate values to the exclusion of others. For example, Fox TV network owner Rupert Murdoch, the world's largest producer of newspapers, changed the political orientation of Britain's best-selling newspaper, *The Sun*, from Labour to Conservative when he bought it in 1974. As a result, a large percentage of British voters read anti-Labour articles the day before the last election, which included an interview with a psychic who claimed Mao Zedong, Adolph Hitler, and Joseph Stalin were supporting the Labour candidate from beyond the grave (McManus, n.d.). In this way, consolidation of big media corporations

...can interfere with the public's right to know by limiting the sources of information. The danger is even greater when news media own, or are owned by, non-news businesses. Both situations threaten to create unethical conflicts of interest. While the news side of the business may be morally obligated to provide a truthful account of the day's events, the non-news corporate partners may have a stake in slanting that account to favor their interests. Information that would adversely affect interconnected or owned businesses may be downplayed. Positive news about such corporate siblings may be promoted, (McManus, n.d.).

In opposition to these remarks, big corporations state that they provide citizens with more volume, choice, quality, and objectivity in the news than ever before. One key argument in support of the mergers of big media corporations is that they create the capital necessary to use satellite technology to broadcast information across the country. Small media companies lack such capital to launch satellites and thus, can only provide information to a limited audience. The consolidation of media corporations is also stated to have had no negative effects on the comprehensiveness of the news or on its intelligence. In fact, the concentration of ownership in media has coincided with general improvement in the quality of American news. Most academic

assessments acknowledge that the depth, objectivity, and relevance of news has improved overall in the 20th century as media ownership has become more concentrated. "Although other factors such as the rising education level of reporters and editors have had some impact on that quality, at the very least, corporate bigness did not halt the trend" (McManus, n.d.).

By enlarging the population that they reach, these mergers also allow corporations to increase their profits as more people buy their newspapers and magazines, access online articles, and view their television channels. The more popular a company is with an audience, the more advertisers will want to pay these companies to show their ads, as they are guaranteed to reach a large population. Companies that want their products shown on television will most likely look at television ratings to see where they should place their ads. As such, media corporations compete with each other to have the highest ratings in order to increase their profits.

To attract large numbers of people to their media outlets, corporations feature stories on what they believe the public wants to hear and is entertained by. This phenomenon, known as sensationalism, is exemplified in most of the media today. Stories of high speed car chases are broadcasted on the news to attract the attention of viewers, and magazines often decorate their covers with the latest celebrity scandal to get people to buy their periodical. Each year stories of politicians having affairs make headlines in the news, but prior to the 1970's, such "soft" news was hardly reported. When newspaper reporters in the 1930's knew that President Franklin Roosevelt had an affair, they did not report it. The media also did not report on the secret tape recordings played by the Federal Bureau of Investigation that revealed that Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. had an affair either (Wilson and Dilulio, 2006).

By being so focused on ratings, today's news corporations are reporting on stories that involve sex, violence, and intrigue at an increasing rate in order to capture the ever shrinking



audience of the highly competitive United States media. Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky consumed more air time in its first month than "the United States showdown with Iran, the Winter Olympics, the pope's visit to Cuba, and the El Niño weather pattern combined," (Wilson and Dilulio, 2006). This trend of presenting the American public with sensational news is further encouraged by the fact that these stories are often cheaper to investigate than the news of America's foreign or domestic policies.

Female politicians are particularly affected by the media's take on reporting "soft" news. In all forms of media, women are often objectified and marginalized, a trend that does not cease when reporters deal with news about the government. In contrast to their male counterparts, the media comments more often on the physical appearance of female politicians, one Fox news reporter stating, "You all saw the famous photo from the weekend of Hillary Clinton looking so haggard, and, what, looking like 92 years old" (Newsome, 2011). In interviews with male politicians about the latest policies being debated in the United States government, the policies are directly addressed throughout the duration of the interview, whereas an interview with a female politician may go off on a tangent, such as in the case of Sarah Palin who was asked, "Breast implants. Did you have them or not?" (Newsome, 2011).

At age 7, an equal percentage of boys and girl say they would like to be president, however by age 15, fewer girls say they would like to be in the white house. In an interview with Marc Rudov, Bill O'Reilly asked, "You get a woman in the oval office, most powerful woman in the world, what's wrong with that?" to which Rudov replied "You mean besides the PMS and the mood swings?" (Newsome, 2011). It is comments like these that girls hear when watching the news that cause them to believe they will not be able to succeed in a career in politics, simply because they are female. This idea is exemplified by the statistic that though women make up 51

percent of the United States population, they only comprise 17 percent of Congress (Newsome, 2011).

Advertisements shown on corporate media stations are often designed to make women feel insecure about their appearance by using photo shopped or airbrushed models in order to get them to buy their products. This further establishes the belief in society that “no matter what else a woman does, no matter what else her achievements, [her] value still depends on how [she] look[s]” (Newsome, 2011). Corporate media stations show these commercials, however, because they need the revenue they receive from the company wishing to show the ad.

The more influence a large corporation has on a media company, the more likely it is for biases to occur in news reports that could damage the reputation of the large corporation, such as in the case of the McLibel case. In the late 1990's, fast food giant, McDonald's, filed a lawsuit against Helen Steel and David Morris for spreading pamphlets which were claimed to have contained libelous information about the company. When the reporters tried to present facts about how McDonald's really treated their employees and how unhealthy their food was, most media companies prevented the news from being publicized. The media corporations were concerned about publishing and broadcasting the kind of information that could lead to threats of legal action and other forms of corporate punishment from McDonald's, even though some of the information was fair and justified (Shah, 2006).

Oil companies that have large stakes in the media are no strangers to using their influence to debunk global warming arguments that could turn the energy market in the way of green energy. When covering stories on global warming, media outlets that are supported by these companies use scientists to inform the public about the facts and falsities of the issue.

Unfortunately, it has been found that during interviews, a disproportionate amount of time is

given to scientists of less credibility, or with additional agendas, who can give the impression that there is more debate than really exists within the scientific community on whether or not global warming is a pressing issue (Shah, 2004).

Corporate ownership of the mass media in the United States has made it possible for people all over the country to be equally informed about the actions of the government, a feat that would be more difficult if many small businesses around the country controlled the media. As a result of mergers between major media companies, this news is also available on a variety of platforms such as television, newspapers, magazines, and the internet, allowing even more people to access the news.

Unfortunately, ownership of the media by large corporations also limits the number of issues raised and the variety of opinions heard on topics. Large companies can use their power to influence the opinions of their audience, and biases in news coverage are more likely to be present. News information becomes increasingly unreliable as non-media companies exert their influence over the media corporations to prevent bad publicity for their company. Non-media companies are able to have this influence because they provide revenue for media companies by paying to have their advertisements placed on television and in newspapers. The need for the support of non-media corporations causes media companies to report on "soft" news, such as the affairs of politicians, in order to attract an audience, resulting in a society that is uninformed about news of merit.

These negative aspects of corporate ownership of the media outweigh the positive because they cause the mass media of the United States to be an ineffective watchdog for the American people. In order for a democracy to be successful, the population needs to be well informed about local, national, and global issues. Currently, the American people seem to be

deprived of such necessary news as a result of biases and illusions created by the corporate ownership of the mass media; problems that are exemplified by the public's lack of information about the nation's use of drones as part of its war on terror.

### **Drones and United States Foreign Policy**

The United States of America began its war on terror in the wake of the most memorable terrorist attack upon the country, 9/11. On that fateful day in 2001, everyone in the country was glued to their television screen watching one of the World Trade Center towers emanate smoke after it had been hit by a commercial airplane. It was not until another plane hit the second tower that the country knew the crashes were no accident. Both buildings collapsed, killing nearly 3,000 people, and on September 20, President George W. Bush spoke before a Joint Session of Congress, and announced his plans for a global war on terror. "Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated," (George W. Bush..., n.d.).

Less than three weeks after his speech, American troops were launched into a military campaign to capture the mastermind behind the attacks, Osama bin Laden, in Afghanistan with a secondary goal of overthrowing the Taliban government who had aided and abetted bin Laden in addition to other terrorists (George W. Bush..., n.d.).

February 4, 2002 was the day that the United States Central Intelligence Agency first used an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), also known as a drone, in a targeted killing. The drone strike occurred in the Paktia province in Afghanistan, near the city of Khost, and was intended to kill Osama bin Laden. However, within days of the strike, journalists were collecting accounts from local Afghans who said that the dead men were civilians who were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time gathering scrap metal (Sifton, 2012). As the media began to ask

questions about why innocent civilians were the ones killed in the attack, so began a decade long, ongoing argument about the moral, ethical, and legal issues surrounding the use of drones as part of United States foreign and national security policies.

In the United States, drone warfare is extremely controversial because it goes against many of the goals espoused by United States foreign policy. The foreign policy of the United States seeks to promote free and open trade, world peace, democratic governments, and a concern for humanity, all while maintaining the utmost security of the nation. The use of drone warfare is quite obviously contradictory to the idea of world peace, as it is an act of war, and the deaths of numerous, innocent civilians caused by drone strikes do not reflect any concern for humanity. Drone warfare is also unnecessary in maintaining free and open trade, and many democratic governments have been created without the use of UAVs. America's goal of maintaining strong national security is the only aspect of United States foreign policy that can possibly defend the use of drones, however, even that argument is debatable in lieu of the largely contradictory aspects of drone use.

The epicenter for America's war on terror is located within the Middle East, and, as expected, the majority of drone strikes by the United States take place on the soil of Middle Eastern countries. However, the majority of terrorist attacks upon the United States are not committed by Islamic terrorists, as one may discern from news reports about our progress on winning the war on terror. A recent study conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation revealed that the top three groups that committed acts of terror on U.S soil were Latinos (42 percent), extreme left wing groups (24 percent), and Jewish extremists (7 percent). Altogether, non-Islamic groups carried out over 90 percent of all terrorist attacks on the U.S whereas Islamic

extremists were only responsible for 6 percent of all terrorist attacks, a fact that many Americans would be surprised to learn (Non-Muslim..., 2013).

In the American mass media, the acts of terror committed by non-Islamic groups are not reported to the extent of which Islamic extremists are. Muslim terrorists are often described in the media as being part of a larger, unified terrorist organization such as al Qaeda. Non-Muslim terrorists on the other hand, especially ones of Caucasian ethnicity, are portrayed as troubled individuals who acted by themselves. These people are also sympathized with for they are frequently diagnosed with some form of mental instability. The titles given to both groups by the media additionally reflect a staggering difference in how they are seen by the media. Islamic extremists are labeled as 'terrorists', a word that carries a more negative connotation compared to 'gunmen', which is usually used to describe white terrorists (Cole, 2012).

The infinitely more frequent and negative portrayal of Muslim terrorists compared to non-Muslims is a form of propaganda that is used to generate support for the United States war effort in the Middle East. By hearing every day that Islamic terrorists from the Middle East are responsible for the deaths of many Americans, citizens of the United States are more likely to support actions that the government chooses to use in order to combat the war on terror, including drone strikes. In a recent Pew survey, 61 percent of Americans were found to support drone warfare in the Middle East (Power, 2013). Americans believe that drone warfare is the best way to ensure their safety because it eliminates the threat of terrorists without jeopardizing the lives of American soldiers. The support for the use of drones by the military creates an increasing demand for unmanned aerial vehicles. By 2025, it is projected that the production of drones will be an \$82 billion business, employing an additional 100,000 workers. Businesses that generate profits from producing drones can influence the media to advertise these benefits of

drone warfare while ignoring the controversy surrounding the subject in order to further increase the demand for their technology.

Drone warfare is a tactic that is advertised to successfully eliminate the threat of terrorists without endangering the lives of American soldiers, however, unmanned aerial vehicles are not as accurate as they are perceived to be. In public statements, the American administration states that there have been “no” or “single digit” civilian casualties as a result of drone attacks, however, “[i]t is difficult to obtain data on strike casualties because of US efforts to shield the drone program from democratic accountability...,” (Stanford International... and Global Justice Clinic..., 2012a). Data on drone strikes provided by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism contradicts the statements made by the U.S and states that from June 2004 through mid-September 2012, drone strikes killed between 2,562 and 3,325 people in Pakistan, of whom between 474 and 881 were civilians; a number that included the deaths of 176 children. Their data also suggested that drone strikes were responsible for injuring an additional 1,228 to 1,362 individuals (Stanford International... and Global Justice Clinic..., 2012a).

Waleed Shiraz, a civilian who survived a drone strike, recounted his ordeal and described how the incident has impacted his life:

My father was asleep in the *hujra* as usual after a normal day, and I was studying nearby...I had liked studying in the *hujra*, because it is peaceful and quiet. There was nothing different about our routine in the prior week... [When we got hit], [m]y father's body was scattered in pieces and he died immediately, but I was unconscious for three to four days... [Since then], I am disabled. My legs have become so weak and skinny that I am not able to walk anymore...It has also affected my back. I used to like playing cricket, but I cannot do it anymore because I cannot run.

I have two younger brothers, who are both unemployed, and I don't have a father and I am disabled. I have been completely ruined... [My brothers] can't go to school, because I can't afford to support them, buying their books, and paying their fees. They are home most of the day and they are very conscious of the fact that drones are hovering over them. [The presence of drones] intimidates them (Stanford International... and Global Justice Clinic..., 2012b).

Shiraz's story is quite similar to that of other people living under the constant buzz of drones in the air. In northwest Pakistan, drones fly over the region twenty-four hours a day, their presence instilling terror in everyday civilians who realize that one could strike anywhere, anytime, without warning. This imminent threat is thought to be responsible for increasing the anxiety levels and psychological trauma among civilian communities in target areas (Stanford International... and Global Justice Clinic..., 2012a).

The use of drones is said to be extremely efficient at combatting terrorism, however, drone strikes have been known to indirectly create new terrorists. The death of a civilian due to a drone strike could cause someone to wish to avenge their loved one. Such incidences are especially prevalent among the poor as the victim may have been the only one able to provide for their family. With nothing to lose, those they left behind are more inclined to go out with a bang, as opposed to starve to death. Others decide to join militant groups that pay them for their services. "Given the link between urban poverty and terrorism, the best strategy to limit the power of militant groups to seduce recruits is to fight poverty, not terrorism" (Odede, 2014)

In terms of promoting a concern for humanity, the use of drones seems to be counterproductive as it causes humanitarian workers and community members to be afraid and unwilling to assist injured victims, out of fear that they will attract the attention of drone



operators by gathering in groups (Stanford International... and Global Justice Clinic..., 2012a). Secondary strikes, known as double taps, are often deployed after the initial strike, and specifically target rescue personnel and first responders. To some Americans, this may seem preposterous as many believe that the United States only deploys drones to specific targets known to be threats to the country's national security. Unfortunately, a specific type of drone strike prevalent under the Obama administration, known as a signature strike, targets people "based on a 'pattern of life' analysis. According to U.S authorities, these strikes target 'groups of men who bear certain signatures, or defining characteristics associated with terrorist activity, but whose identities aren't known.'" Adding to the controversy surrounding signature strikes, the U.S government has not publicly revealed what those defining characteristics are, causing some in the Obama administration joke that when the CIA sees "three guys doing jumping jacks," they think it is a terrorist training camp. (Stanford International... and Global Justice Clinic..., 2012c). However, though signature strikes are bad, personality strikes, which target named, allegedly high-value leaders are not much more effective. The number of "high-level" targets killed as a percentage of total casualties is extremely low - estimated at just 2 percent (Bergen and Braun, 2012).

In the past, the Pakistani government supported drone strikes in their nation by the United States, however, they have since passed legislation that prohibits the act of drone strikes in their territory. By continuing to deploy drones in the area, the United States is in direct violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. Though one of the goals of United States foreign policy is to promote democratic governments, the continued use of drone strikes also undermines the power of the Pakistani government.

Not only are drone strikes illegal according to Pakistani law, but they are also illegal according to U.S domestic laws. Drone use is justified by the Authorization for Use of Military Force which “[a]uthorizes the President to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations, or persons” (Civic Impulse, LLC, n.d.). However, this public law has been interpreted to be able to override U.S constitutional amendments for rights to free speech and to a trial. In one well known case, Anwar al-Awlaki was an American citizen that the Central Intelligence Agency was authorized to kill because of his terrorist activities and connections to al Qaeda. On September 30, 2011, al-Awlaki was killed in a drone attack in Yemen by the United States without a trial, which is a violation of the sixth Amendment (Mazzetti, Schmitt, & Worth, 2011).

Obama addressed this issue by stating that he did not believe it was constitutional for the government to target and kill any U.S citizen, but that it was necessary if they were actively plotting to kill U.S citizens and the government was unable to stop him before he carried out the plot. In that case, "his citizenship should no more serve as a shield than a sniper shooting down on an innocent crowd should be protected from a SWAT team" (Koebler, 2013).

The use of drones as part of the United States' war on terror has created many questions as to whether or not the government remembers what its overall foreign policy goals are. Drone strikes are not necessary in order to promote free and open trade, and because they are used as a part of war, the strikes contradict America's supposed support for world peace. They also undermine the power of Pakistan's democratic government because drone strikes are illegal in

the region, and questions about their legality have been raised in the U.S as some strikes directly violate American laws. Finally, a concern for humanity is not reflected by the use of drones as they kill innocent civilians and first responders who try to help the injured after attacks. If the government of the United States wants to maintain the respect that it has from other countries and its own citizens, it should eliminate its use of drones to erase any belief of moral, ethical, and legal wrong doing that negatively impacts the view of the country as a respectable superpower.

### **Conclusion**

Though America is described as a democracy, and thus supposedly exemplifies the ideas of traditional democratic theory, there is evidence to suggest that the actual power structure of the nation is better classified in accordance with elite class theory, which states that the nation is governed by a select few as opposed to being governed by the people. As such, the people do not have much power to influence how their representatives vote on policies, because the power lies with the social elite, which is comprised primarily by those who own large businesses and corporations.

In order for the government to pass legislation that benefits the majority of its citizens, the middle class needs to be economically strong and well educated, characteristics that correlate with increased voter participation. When more of the population votes on legislation that seeks to benefit them, the policies implemented in society better pertain to the needs of the people. Currently however, the middle class is facing hard times due to the recession that began with the economic collapse of 2008, created by poor regulation of big businesses. In accordance with trickle-down economic policies that are in place because of big business influence on American politicians, these broken corporations were bailed out in order to try and restore the economy.

However, the trickle-down policies did not work as advertised, and the economy did not turn around as expected.

During this time, the middle class became discouraged with how the government was run, and believed their needs would never be met as large corporations had more power to pass policies that directly benefitted them as opposed to all of society. Voter turnout decreased as the middle class held the sentiment that they would be unable to make a difference. Those that still believed they could have an impact began to want a change in their government, and were thus more inclined to elect new politicians into office. Big businesses, however, would fund the campaigns of the politicians they believed were most likely to win and would then ask for their favor to be reciprocated in the form of the politician's support for policies that would benefit large corporations.

These big businesses also exert their influence over the American media, as large media corporations and non-media corporations ally themselves with each other in hopes of increasing their profits. For example, large non-media corporations pay corporate media outlets to show advertisements for their products, thus increasing the profits of media businesses. These large corporations are then able to influence what news information the media shows to the public because the media corporations do not want to lose the money they receive from the advertisements of big businesses. As a result, the information that is given to the public is often convoluted and biased. This further affects how the government is run because the people are misinformed about local, national and global issues, such as in the case of the use of drones as part of America's war on terror.

The production of drones is expected to be an 82 billion dollar business by 2025 and as a result, the corporations that produce drones want to generate support for the continued use of

their product. This causes them to exert their influence over the media in order to make the American public believe that Middle Eastern extremists are the number one terrorist threat to the United States, and thus generate support for the country's war on terror, when, in truth, the top three groups that threaten American national security are Latinos, extreme left wing groups, and Jewish extremists. In consequence, drone warfare in the Middle East is greatly supported by the American public because it combats the terrorist threats from the region without putting soldiers' lives at risk.

Drone warfare, however, raises many moral, ethical, and legal questions as it contradicts many of America's foreign policy goals. These facts, however, are not portrayed in the media as the government does not want to advertise its hypocrisies, and drone producing businesses do not want to decrease support for drone use as it would decrease their profits.

Back in the eighteenth century, when the people began to feel that the government did not adequately serve their needs, they radicalized and decided to form their own government that would be run by the people, for the people. However, as large American corporations have obtained an immense amount of control over how the nation is run, the government has reverted back to the exact one the original American colonists were trying to escape from. In order for the United States to once again have a government that seeks to serve the people, as opposed to a select few, the majority of the American population needs to believe that they have the power to change the way the government functions by making their voice heard. Ideally, corrupt politicians and greedy business owners would learn to work in harmony with the people to make America a land where everyone prospers, but because utopias are a concept of fantasy, the best we can hope for as a society is for everyone to compromise as best they can in order to make the government serve the needs of the majority of the nation.

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