

Executive Summary: Drone Strikes and Aid to Authoritarian Regimes

Our review of the relevant survey literature indicates that in the U.S., public support for human rights issues surrounding drone strikes and aid to authoritarian regimes is heavily influenced by question framing. Americans typically express high, bipartisan support for drone warfare, yet become significantly less supportive when pollsters mention the risk to civilians. Given widespread public ignorance about foreign aid, moreover, novel information and messaging can move public opinion on this issue as well. The limited available evidence on this count indicates that Americans do tend to consider the human rights records of aid recipient countries, suggesting they might be susceptible to Human Rights Watch (HRW) messaging on recipient-country rights abuses.

Our review also indicates that HRW and similar rights organizations do not generally cite or discuss public opinion data in their public reports, letters, or social media posts. HRW could potentially utilize polling data and civilian casualties messaging in its future work on drone strikes to pressure the U.S. government to adhere to international legal standards, increase domestic awareness and support, and even closely collaborate with like-minded institutions. We also find that while Americans vastly overestimate the amount their government spends on foreign aid, providing members of the public with more accurate information may prompt them to be more amenable to increasing aid for human rights capacity building. These opportunities could be effective avenues of persuasion toward members of the public not traditionally known for their pro-human rights attitudes.

Public Opinion & Foreign Policy: Drone Strikes

Drone Strikes and Civilian Casualties

The U.S. has relied heavily on drones to support counterterrorism efforts across Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia. Compared to 2016, the number of U.S. drone strikes launched in 2017 doubled in Somalia and Afghanistan and tripled in Yemen ([Purkiss, Serle & Fielding-Smith 2017](#)). The U.S. has also relied heavily on drone strikes in Iraq and Syria as part of its campaign against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). According to the NGO [Airwars](#), coalition air strikes increased by 49% from 2016 to 2017, and associated civilian casualties grew by 215% ([Hopkins 2018](#)).

Table 1: Public Support for Drone Strikes				
Year	Organization	Support (%)	Oppose (%)	
2011	Pew	68	19	
2012	Pew	62	28	
	WaPo/ABC	83	11	
2013	CBS/NYT	71	20	
	CBS/NYT	72	22	
	Fairleigh Dickinson	75	13	
	Fox News	74	12	
	Gallup	65	28	
	NBC/WSJ	64	12	
	NBC/WSJ	66	15	
	Pew	56	26	
	Pew	61	30	
	Quinnipiac	69	24	
2014	CBS/NYT	56	38	
	CBS/NYT	66	29	
	Pew	52	41	
2015	Associated Press-GFK	60	13	
	Pew	58	35	

This sharp increase in noncombatant deaths was affected by multiple factors, including coalition attacks on ISIL strongholds in Mosul and Raqqa, and the Trump administration’s decision to loosen regulations governing U.S. drone strikes.

U.S. Public Opinion on Drone Strikes

Public opinion polls conducted since 2011 show reasonably strong support among Americans for U.S. drone strikes, as indicated in Table 1.¹ Between 2011 and 2015, public support for these

¹ Table 1 show results from polling questions designed to elicit “unframed” support for drones strikes. Questions with distinct frames likely to affect support were excluded. Excluded frames included “civilian casualties” and “high-level targets”.

strikes never dropped below 52% ([Pew 2014](#)), and was typically above 60%. These findings have contributed to a consensus among scholars, policymakers and activists that the U.S. public unambiguously and [strongly supports](#) drone usage.

A deeper look at the polling results, however, suggests that public support for these strikes may be softer, and more uneven, than Table 1 suggests. Instead, drone support appears to vary significantly based on respondents’ demographic characteristics and pollsters framing of their survey questions.

The Impact of Socio-Demographics on Public Attitudes Towards Drone Strikes

Political Partisanship

	Mar.2013	Dec. 2013	Feb. 2014	May 2015
Republicans (%)	79	79	81	74
Democrats (%)	55	67	61	52
Difference	(-24)	(-12)	(-20)	(-22)

([Gallup 2013](#); [Quinnipiac 2013](#); [CBS/New York Times 2013](#); [Pew 2015](#))

Public support for drone strikes varies across party lines, with Republicans demonstrating much higher support than Democrats, as indicated in Table 2. The magnitude of the difference varies between 12 and 22 points. This partisan gap may result from different basic values as well as different cues from relevant political elites. Research indicates that fundamental, underlying ideological positions such as those with a “hawkish” or “dovish” foreign policy orientation, are strong predictors of policy preferences and are heavily correlated with partisanship ([Eichenberg & Stoll 2017](#)). In addition, opinion is partially shaped by signals from partisan elites ([Berinsky 2007](#)).

It is important to note, however, that the polls suggest a bipartisan consensus for drone strikes, with pro-strike majorities among both Republican and Democratic respondents. As Table

2 indicates, political partisanship matters, but does not push support for drone strikes below the 55% mark.

Gender

	Feb. 2013	April 2013	June 2013	Dec. 2013
Women (%)	44	53	67	63
Men (%)	68	70	78	75
Difference	(-22)	(-17)	(-11)	(-12)

([Pew 2013](#); [Pew 2013](#); [CBS/New York Times 2013](#); [Quinnipiac 2013](#))

Women are less likely than men to support drone strikes, as shown in Table 3. This gender effect is consistent with the broader scholarly literature on gender and use of military force. An analysis of survey questions² regarding public support for the use of military force from 1982 to 2013 found that “women on average show less support for using military force for any purpose, any type of military action, in every historical episode” ([Eichenberg 2016](#)). Other studies have also found less female support for historical conflicts, such as the Persian Gulf War, the invasions of Panama and Grenada, and the Vietnam War ([Nincic & Nincic 2002](#); [Burris 2008](#)).

Race

Support for drone strikes also varies across racial groups. One 2013 poll, for example, found that white American respondents were 6 percentage points more likely than black respondents to support drone usage ([CBS/New York Times, 2013](#)). In a second 2015 poll, moreover, whites were 20 points more likely to support drone strikes than African Americans, and 27 points more likely than Hispanics ([Pew 2015](#)). The scholarly literature on racial

² This study analyzed 965 survey questions from 1982 to 2013.

differences in public attitudes for military force is less developed than that for gender; still, available research indicates that black Americans tend to be less supportive than whites across a wide range of conflicts ([Nincic & Nincic 2002](#); [Burris 2008](#)). However, the effect of race on public support for military force appears to be less consistent than the effect of gender.

Public Opinion & Civilian Casualties

The high level of U.S. public support for drone strikes may well be driven by the way in which pollsters have typically framed their questions. For example, one widely-used item to measure the public’s drone support is, “*Do you approve of the United States conducting missile strikes from pilotless aircraft called drones to target extremists in countries such as Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia?*” ([Pew 2015](#)). This question emphasizes the use of drones to target “dangerous people,” and reflects government rhetoric without mention of the policy’s more controversial aspects. Survey questions that frame drone strikes in a more negative or controversial light should find lower support for drone use.

Table 4: Concern for Civilian Casualties		
<i>How concerned are you, if at all, about whether U.S. drone strikes endanger to lives of innocent civilians?</i>		
	Feb. 2013	May 2015
Very (%)	53	48
Somewhat (%)	28	32
Not too (%)	8	11
Not at all (%)	7	8

([Pew 2013](#); [Pew 2015](#))

References to civilian casualties are one way to frame drone strikes more negatively, and the polls do indicate some public concern for the lives of foreign civilians, as indicated in Table 4. In the [2015 poll](#) of 2,002 people by Pew, surveyors found that more respondents (48%) were “*very concerned*” about civilian casualties than the danger of retaliation (32%), legality (31%), and damage to U.S. reputation (26%). To take another example, consider the 2013 YouGov poll,

which found that only 25% of Americans were supportive of “*drone attacks that may kill civilians,*” compared to 52% opposed ([YouGov 2013](#)³). Two years later, the same question by YouGov elicited 29% support, contrasted with 42% in opposition. ([YouGov 2015](#)⁴). Thus, when survey questions explicitly reference civilian deaths, public support for drone strikes drops. On the topic of drone strikes, U.S. public opinion is susceptible to civilian casualty messaging.

The Experimental Literature on Public Attitudes Towards Civilian Casualties

Survey experiments offer a more rigorous test of the notion that fear of civilian casualties reduces public support for drone strikes. In these studies, scholars randomly allocate respondents from the same survey into different “treatment” groups, with each group receiving a different message than the others. The effect of all these messages on respondent opinion is then compared to a “control group,” which respondents to a more neutral question without the messaging components.

We know of only two rigorous survey experiments on public attitudes towards drone strikes. According to one conducted in 2014, “neutrally” worded or control questions⁵ found 52% support for drone strikes, while question variants emphasizing civilian casualties elicited substantially lower respondent support ([Kreps 2014](#)). One treatment referenced uncertainty about the target’s identity, asking respondents for their views of drone strikes against “*individuals who appear to behave in similar ways as terrorists- for example, going to a meeting with community elders- but who may not be confirmed terrorists*”. The second treatment gauged support for drone strikes when “*in addition to the intended targets, these strikes have often*

³ Conducted online with a n=996. Nationally representative.

⁴ Conducted online with a n=1,000. Nationally representative.

⁵ “Do you support drone strikes to kill suspected members of Al Qaeda and other terrorists?” This question formulation reflects that of Pew (2015).

caused a number of civilian casualties”. These treatments reduced support for drone strikes to 29% and 27%, respectively, a substantial distance from the 52% support generated by the control question. This finding is consistent with the previously cited, non-experimental YouGov polls indicating less than 30% support for strikes that may kill civilians ([YouGov 2013](#), [2015](#)).

A second, 2016 survey experiment⁶ further explored the impact of messaging by attributing commentary on US drone strikes to three different sources: Human Rights Watch, the United Nations, and the U.S. government ([Kreps & Wallace 2016](#)). Respondents were given background information on drones from one of these sources and were then asked whether they supported the concept of strikes. HRW and UN-sourced messages asserted that “*these strikes violate international law because because they do not take necessary measures to prevent civilian deaths.*” The U.S. government-sourced message, however, asserted the opposite. When compared to the control group,⁷ respondent support for drone strikes decreased by 8 points as a result of the UN prompt and by 6 points after the HRW prompt. U.S. government messaging only increased support by 1 point, suggesting that information from HRW and the UN was more impactful. The difference, the authors hypothesized, was not the result of respondents viewing HRW and the UN as more credible than the U.S. government.⁸ Rather, they hypothesized that the information on violations of international law presented by HRW and the UN was more novel. The public was already widely exposed to messaging from the U.S. government contending drone strikes rarely kill civilians, so it follows that exposure to this information would have little effect on existing opinion. The public had less previous exposure to messaging

⁶ Conducted online through GfK with an n=2,394. Nationally representative.

⁷ Support for drone strikes in the control group was 52%

⁸ Over 70% of respondents viewed the U.S government as credible, compared to about 55% who thought the UN and HRW were credible.

that argues the opposite. As a result, the more novel position asserted by HRW and UN messaging had a stronger impact on support for drones.

These two experimental studies provide further evidence that U.S. public opinion on drone strikes declines when framed as a real threat to non-U.S. civilians. Across multiple polls and survey experiments, less than 50% of respondents that received information about civilian casualties expressed support for drone strikes.

Messaging emphasizing civilian casualties thus has the potential to decrease U.S. public support for drone strikes, challenging the consensus that drone strikes abroad enjoy strong public support.

Human Rights Watch & Peer Organizations

Interestingly, very little of the published work by U.S.-based rights organizations cites or relies upon this kind of public opinion data. Instead, most arguments and proposals rely on international legal arguments and treaty obligations. Although such arguments will certainly appeal to an audience of globally-oriented public servants, organizations such as HRW might also consider the strength of arguments based on public opinion when speaking with lawmakers and officials.⁹

Human Rights Watch

HRW has been a vocal opponent of drone warfare as currently practiced, arguing that lethal strikes should only be used when there exists an imminent threat to life, as per international law (Human Rights Watch, 2014). This type of advocacy has not been restricted to the Trump administration, as HRW published numerous commentaries, open letters, and reports

⁹ See appendix for more about the work of other relevant organizations.

throughout the Obama presidency, especially during the latter half of his administration.¹⁰ Much of HRW's advocacy attention in this period focused on drone strikes against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), with special emphasis on high-profile strikes in Yemen that resulted in substantial civilian casualties. HRW saw civilian casualties as an important enough problem to publish a long-form report in October 2013, *Between a Drone and Al-Qaeda: The Civilian Cost of US Targeted Killings in Yemen* (HRW, 2013), which examines, in graphic detail, six US strikes in Yemen from 2009 to 2013.

More recently, HRW teamed up with other human rights-focused organizations to deliver a statement on the Trump administration's relaxation of drone strike requirements in October 2017. The March 7th letter, co-signed by the American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, and others, strongly criticized the administration's drone policy. Specifically, the cosigners took issue with the removal of the requirement for "imminent threat" posed by targeted individuals; its broad classification of "enemy fighters;" and relaxed White House review procedures in favor of expanded CIA involvement in the execution of strikes (HRW et al., 2018). In another open letter, HRW and numerous cosigning organizations addressed the UN Human Rights Council, voicing concern about the U.S. government's targeted killing programs. Specifically, the letter calls for more transparency, compliance with international law, better accountability, and more effective measurement of civilian casualties (HRW et al., 2014).

None of these HRW publications, however, referred to the above-cited evidence on U.S. public opinion towards drone strikes and civilian casualties.

¹⁰ Much of this work was published between 2013-2018.

Aid to Authoritarian Regimes

U.S public opinion on foreign aid to authoritarian regimes has only recently attracted serious, high-quality scholarly attention. These and other polls, however, show that Americans know very little about foreign aid in general, as well as aid to abusive regimes ([Heinrich and Kobayashi 2018](#)). The sparse nature of this literature necessarily limits what we know, but also provides HRW with an opportunity to engage in a general public-focused conversation about foreign aid recipients and their human rights records.

Public Opinion on Foreign Aid

Research into public opinion on foreign aid began after World War II, initially focusing on awareness of, and attitudes towards, the Marshall Plan ([Gallup 1947](#)). Today, research focuses on general American knowledge and support for foreign aid, with the most common questions including the following:

- *How much money do you think the United States spends on foreign aid?*
- *Do you think America spends too much money on foreign aid?*
- *How much money should the United States be spending on foreign aid?*¹¹

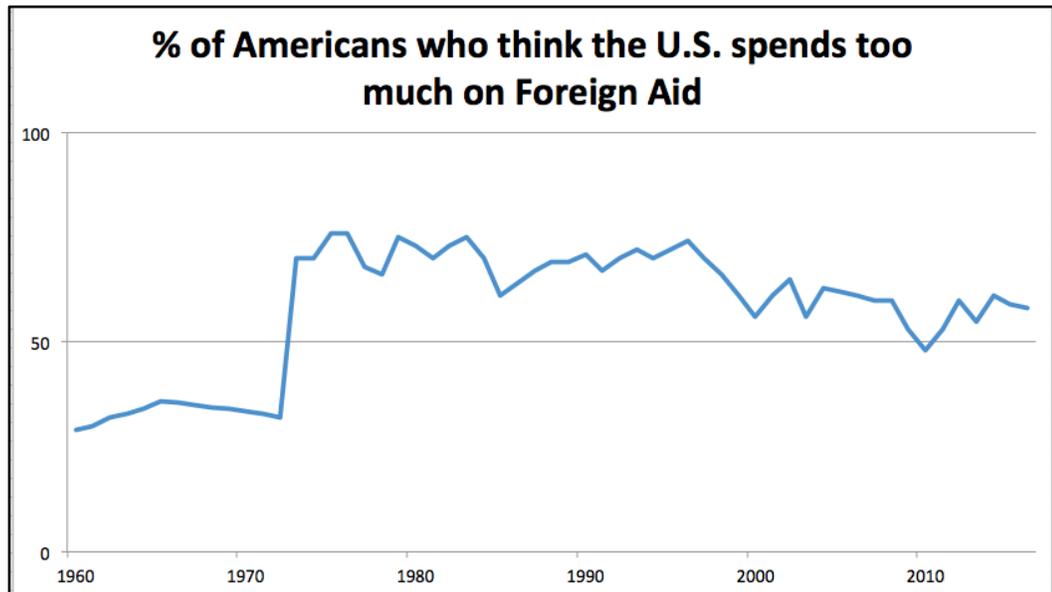
In 2017 Devex, a development think tank and job site, did a comprehensive overview of Gallup polls on the topic.¹² It found that from 1960 to 2016, there was a dramatic increase in the number of Americans believing that the U.S. spends too much on foreign aid, rising from 30% to 56%. The highest point in this period was after the Vietnam war (1976), however, when 76% thought

¹¹ Gallup 1947; Roper Center 1995; Roper Center 1996; Pew 2013; YouGov March 2016; Pew April 2016; Norris 2017;

¹² Devex reviewed hundreds survey questions from iPoll database, starting from 1935 to 2017. Only questions that appeared in multiple polls with a large number of responses were analyzed.

that the amount of aid was too high ([Norris 2017](#)). These shifts in general public sentiment towards aid can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Percent of Americans who think the U.S. spends too much money on Foreign Aid over time



[Norris \(2017\)](#)

Americans also dramatically overestimate the amount spent on foreign aid, and this misperception may be prompting more disapproval of aid policy. In 1995, for example, respondents on average thought the U.S. government spent 18% of its budget on international aid, while in 2010, respondents estimated that the number was 27%. In actuality, of course, only 1% of the federal budget goes towards foreign aid ([Norris 2017](#)). When survey respondents were given this information, the number of respondents arguing that the U.S. spent too much on aid dropped to 18%, a truly dramatic decrease ([Roper Center 1995](#)).

The Impact of Socio-Demographics on Public Attitudes Towards Aid

Political Partisanship

Party affiliation is a significant driver of public opinion towards foreign aid. As Table 5 indicates, Republicans tend to be more supportive than Democrats of decreasing *funding to the world's needy*.¹³ These results are not surprising, given Republican support for cutting government spending in general ([Pew 2017](#)).

Table 5. Partisan support for decreasing funding or giving too much aid

Foreign Aid Questions			
	Question	Democrat	Republican
Pew 2013	Should the United States decrease funding to the world's needy?	25%	70%
YouGov 2016	Do you think the United States gives too much foreign aid?	42%	68%
Pew 2017	Should the United States decrease funding to the world's needy?	13%	56%

[Pew 2013](#) [YouGov 2016](#) [Pew 2017](#)

Gender

Researchers have not found a significant gender effect on public support for foreign aid. Although Table 6 does indicate slightly higher female support for an increase in foreign aid, the difference with males is not large enough to conclude that gender matters.

¹³ Pew Poll asked if participants would “increase”, “decrease”, or “keep spending the same.” 2017 Poll: n=1501 via random digit dialing. 2013 Poll: n= 1504 via random digit dialing. See Appendix for more information

Table 6. Gender Distribution of Foreign Aid Budget

Do you think the US Government spends too much or too little on foreign aid? ¹⁴			
	Total	Male	Female
Too Much	51%	55%	48%
The Right Amount	21%	23%	19%
Too Little	8%	8%	10%
Not Sure	18%	14%	22%

[YouGov 2016](#)

Race

Race and ethnicity, however, does impact the public's views on foreign aid. As Table 7 indicates, more white Americans believe the federal government spends too much on foreign aid than either blacks or Hispanics.

Table 7. Race Distribution of Foreign Aid Budget

Do you think the US Government spends too much or too little on foreign aid? ¹⁵				
	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
Too Much	51%	59%	36%	34%
The Right Amount	21%	18%	26%	28%
Too Little	9%	7%	13%	13%
Not Sure	18%	16%	25%	25%

[YouGov 2016](#)

¹⁴ YouGov Poll March 1-3, 2016. This poll used a random sample selected from the 2010 American Community Study. The sample was weighted using propensity scores. n=1000

¹⁵ YouGov Poll March 1-3, 2016. This poll used a random sample selected from the 2010 American Community Study. The sample was weighted using propensity scores. n=1000

The Scholarly Literature on International Aid

There has been little scholarly work on public opinion towards foreign aid to authoritarian regimes. The two experimental studies on the topic produced mixed results. [Allendorfer \(2017\)](#) studied public opinion on aid to authoritarians by telling certain respondents a story about a specific human rights violation.¹⁶ This fictional story includes information about the country's relationship (using trade) with the U.S. and its previous human rights violations. The control group did not read a human rights story, and 91% of respondents in the control group supported increasing aid to important trading partners. Then, researchers asked respondents whether the U.S. should “decrease” or “increase” aid to a country with a “bad human rights” story, finding that 53% supported decreasing aid, while 47% supported an increase. Consistent with previous polls, Republicans were more supportive of cutting aid than Democrats. Compared to the control group, the “bad human rights” story reduced support for increasing aid by 44 percentage points. Even though this study used a sample that was not nationally representative, the drastic drop in support for foreign aid is important to consider for future research. This study provides a strong foundation for future research about foreign aid to authoritarian regimes.

A study published in 2018 tested the impact of aid theft, rigged elections, media crackdowns, and torture in recipient countries on public support for U.S. aid. ([Heinrich and Kobayshi 2018](#)).¹⁷ With the exception of aid theft, respondents supported an increase in foreign

¹⁶ The story in this study is as follows: *Chad has been a long standing ally and valuable trading partner to the United States. As such, Chad plays an important role in US national security and economic well-being. If the United States cuts foreign assistance to Chad, it is likely to negatively affect the US economy and security interests in the region. Evidence gathered by Amnesty International indicates that villages in northern Chad, in an area held by the rebel group, endured multiple scorched earth offices carried out by the Chadian military in 2012.*

¹⁷ The author describes the authoritarian regimes as “Nasty” regimes and defines it as “those that abuse human rights, foster corruption, and rig elections.” Later using Pakistan and Egypt as examples.

aid to help the recipient country to remedy their human rights problems.¹⁸ This finding may indicate American participants are more concerned with remedying human rights violations than punishing countries for causing them.

These two studies indicate human rights violations by recipient countries impact U.S. public support for aid. As previously indicated in Figure 1, over 50% of Americans are in favor of cutting foreign aid. However, scholarly literature suggests that respondents are open to increasing aid when it will alleviate human rights problems, rather than demanding aid cuts to authoritarian regimes. While concerns about human rights do not necessarily result in less support for aid, people do respond to human rights appeals. Foreign aid messaging focusing on human rights violations could have an impact on public opinion. While it may seem counterintuitive to give authoritarian regimes more aid funds, foreign aid is not always given directly to governments. Foreign aid is often dispersed to nongovernmental organizations and local nonprofits instead.

As indicated above, these two experimental studies had different findings. In 2017, Allendorfer found that respondents supported **cutting** aid for human rights violations, while Heinrich and Kobayshi (2018) found that respondents supported **increasing** aid to help recipient governments improve their human rights records. Both of these experimental studies used Amazon's MTurk online polling services, meaning they did not use nationally representative data. Non representative survey are considered acceptable when testing messages, but more work remains to be done before drawing any firm conclusions.

¹⁸ This study used Amazon's MTurk with n=2,217 in April 2014. The author notes the demographics reached by MTurk are not nationally representative, but this study was experimental and preliminary results can be used for further research. The study was weighted to match the demographics of the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

Recommendations

We recommend that HRW consider including certain aspects of public opinion data in its future reports and published work. Especially on the topic of drone strikes, respondents tend to be very sensitive to messaging on the risks of civilian casualties. Support for drone strikes in general decreases dramatically when researchers reference civilian casualties. In addition to the framework of international law and treaty obligations currently favored by HRW, we recommend referencing public opinion data when making recommendations to legislators, opinion leaders and policymakers.

As the academic field of aid to authoritarian regimes is still nascent, there is still opportunity for expanded research. In the short-term however, HRW leaders might consider the possibility of educating Americans about the real nature of foreign development aid. Specifically, Americans vastly overestimate the proportion of the federal budget spent on foreign aid, and research shows that they tend to be more amenable to aid spending when they know the true budgetary proportion, or if the aid is designated as support for human rights remedies. Predictably, Republicans tend to be warier about aid spending than Democrats, but an “opportunity to educate” exists throughout the population.

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Appendix

A. Methodology

- Public opinion and scholarly articles were gathered from Google Scholar, JSTOR, Pew, Gallup, YouGov, and Roper Center, and University of Minnesota libraries and interlibrary loan services..
- Keywords used in searches for drone strikes and civilian casualties: “drone strikes”, “public opinion”, “drone strikes + public opinion”, “civilian casualties”, “civilian casualties + drone strikes”, “civilian casualties + public opinion”, “foreign policy + public opinion” + “human rights + public opinion”, “gender + support for military force”, “race +support for military force”.
- Keywords used in searches for foreign aid and authoritarian regimes: “aid + authoritarian”, “aid + human rights”, “aid + democracy”, “foreign aid + authoritarian”, “foreign aid + human rights”.

B. HRW & Relevant Organizations

Human Rights Watch

HRW has been a vocal opponent of the current policy framework for engaging in drone warfare, often arguing that lethal strikes should only be used where there exists an imminent threat to life per international law human rights law (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Nor was this advocacy restricted to the Trump administration: HRW published numerous commentaries, open letters, and reports throughout the Obama presidency, especially during the latter half of his administration (HRW, 2013-2018). Much of the attention of HRW’s advocacy during this period focused on drone strikes against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), specifically on high-profile strikes in Yemen that resulted in severe civilian casualties. HRW saw civilian casualties as an important enough problem to publish a long-form, thoroughly-researched report in October 2013, “Between a Drone and Al-Qaeda: The Civilian Cost of US Targeted Killings in Yemen” (HRW, 2013). This nearly 100-page report examines, often in graphic detail, six targeted strikes in Yemen between 2009 and 2013 and offers policy recommendations based on extensive field research.

More recently, HRW teamed up with other human rights-focused organizations to deliver a statement on the Trump administration’s relaxation of drone strike requirements in October 2017. The March 7th letter, consigned by organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International, expresses strong dissent with the direction the administration is going with drone policy. Specifically, the cosigners take issue with the removal of the requirement for “imminent threat” posed by targeted individuals; broad classification of who is an “enemy fighter;” and relaxed White House review in favor of expanded CIA involvement in the execution of strikes (HRW et al., 2018). In another open letter, HRW and numerous cosigning organizations address the UN Human Rights Council to voice grievances with (the United States’) targeted killing programs. Specifically, the letter calls for more transparency,

compliance with international law, better accountability, and more effective measurement of civilian casualties (HRW et al., 2014).

On the issue of foreign aid, HRW's work tends also to focus on its tried and true "naming and shaming" strategy. For instance, recent reports have [criticized the government](#) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Similarly to work on drone strikes, HRW also [joined forces](#) with other organizations to call for a cessation of aid to Cambodia over human rights concerns. In general, the nature of HRW's work on aid mirrors that on drone strikes. Rhetoric often focuses on international agreements and obligations, and employs public opinion arguments relatively infrequently.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International has commented extensively on the U.S. use of drones. In general, their reports strike a similar tone to HRW's work, advocating for greater transparency, oversight, accountability to victims, and "civil society participation in the development of standards" (Amnesty International, 2017). Similar to HRW's Yemen report, "Will I Be Next?" takes a field research-based approach to U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan. The report uses international law arguments as well as personal anecdotes to illustrate the deadly impact of targeted strikes on civilians, going as far as suggesting that some targeted strikes could be considered war crimes (AI, 2013).

Amnesty is active in advocacy for aid, but strikes a slightly different tone than HRW. As the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar continued, the organization [called on Myanmar's government](#) to change policy and allow humanitarian organizations to reach the vulnerable populations affected by the crisis. Similar to HRW, Amnesty often employs international legal arguments in published work on international aid. However, the use of public opinion data is rare.

American Civil Liberties Union

Though mostly dedicated to domestic civil rights issues, the American Civil Liberties Union has occasionally done work in the foreign policy area of human rights as well. In August 2016, the organization finally convinced the courts to release the Obama administration's "Presidential Policy Guidance," a document that provides a policy framework for the administration's targeted killings. While heavily redacted, the document is available to the public on the ACLU's website and helps shed light on targeted killings by the U.S. government (ACLU, 2016).

Again, much of the ACLU's work focuses on domestic human rights abuses. In line with this, the work most directly related to foreign aid deals mostly with the Trump administration's "global gag rule" and potential ramifications for civil liberties. The use of public opinion data is not widespread.