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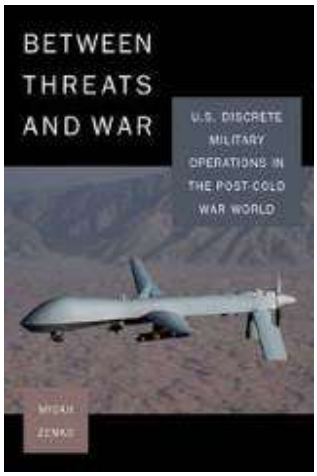

Micah Zenko, *Between Threats and War: US Discrete Military Operations in the Post-Cold War World*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Security Studies – Stanford University Press, 2010.

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Over the past century, a gradual shift has taken place in which the conditions for total war have considerably faded. This steady realignment toward full-scale war, however, exposes the many varieties of force that still exist along a continuum bookended by the state of absolute war and that of peace. Much has been written about the occurrence of full-scale war within the international system, yet the level of attention given to what occurs when neither a state of peace nor state of war exists remains somewhat derisory. The last two decades, in particular, can be characterized as

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a state of threat within which varying degrees of the utility of force have persisted. Such processes and practices with public spheres are slowly being examined but questions of why specific forms of forms have continued to be used despite criticism of their political and military effectiveness are seldom raised. Moreover, they continue to go unanswered even though they have become relatively commonplace and seem to be the preferred policy option of US administrations. Academics addressing issues of evolving military culture and technological base within the 21st century have only begun to delve into the nature of America's discrete military operations (DMOs) but rarely depict them in terms of their implication for the future of military practice.

Micah Zenko's engages with the practice of DMOs, posing a simple but important question regarding their effectiveness from two angles. The author's study comprises the investigation of four cases in order to reach an understanding of DMOs over roughly the past 20 years. They include those of the Iraqi No-Fly Zones (NFZ) (July 1991-April 2003), Operation Infinite Reach (August 20, 1998), Yemeni Assassination (November 3, 2002), and Khurmal, Iraq (Summer 2002). Even in spite of ongoing debate regarding the efficacy of DMOs, the findings of this work show that America's "use of DMOs since 1991 have been tactically successful at meeting most military objectives, but strategically ineffective in achieving specific political goals" (12). Thus, Zenko's findings arguably fuel the debate centering on this particular type of force by underscoring their effectiveness on one level but also highlighting their fruitlessness on another. "The findings," asserts Zenko, "are not promising for DMOs as a political solution" given that, "a detailed analysis of the evidence shows that five of the thirty-six cases had an undetermined military outcome." From the remaining cases included within this study, only 52% were successful in achieving the military objectives for which they were undertaken whereas a mere 6% were able to meet all of the political objectives laid out by the US military (12). Outcomes of Zenko's efforts therefore represent a fascinating vantage point from which to launch subsequent studies of US military operations of this nature, especially given that 88% of all uses of force by the US in the post-Cold War period have been DMOs (8).

Civilian-military relations are a central part of the discussion about DMOs. They represent a deep and structural split as a result of the environments in which military and civilian personnel operate respectively. Training, education, and employment are

part-and-parcel to the deep functioning of military communities that are markedly different from their civilian counterparts due to their "strong identities" (23). Supporting a common doctrine contributes to the disconnection between the two blocs in democratic societies, predominantly as a result of the various actions and roles for which different branches of government and societies are generally fitted. Illustrating this interaction, Zenko contextualizes the relationship that assists in the actualization of DMOs, the way they are perceived, and their future place in societies existing and operating in an ever-changing geopolitical landscape.

Zenko clearly establishes the conditions under which this examination was undertaken and also describes the rationale behind the choice of cases as well as exemptions made. In doing so, an outline is made for the study of US cases of DMOs, which is categorized according political and military objectives and outcomes. Subsequent studies will ultimately serve to build upon Zenko's findings by changing the foci so as to include more or different cases contained within a purview of specific types of weapons, administrations, types of war, or specific periods of time. With this in mind, Zenko's work constitutes a valuable first step in what is most certainly to be seen as a burgeoning area of studies. Although little attention is afforded to the existing literature regarding competing or complementary forms of intervention, conflict, and warfare within the realm of policymaking and academia, Zenko is able to identify firstly, a gap or puzzle that forms the basis of this examination, and secondly, an unambiguous delineation between these modalities or applications of force in the contemporary period. He distinguishes between types of force employed today as compared to those during previous centuries and what precisely constitutes these actions, including their logical undergirding and subsequent implications.

International Relations (IR) theorists might be quick to note the theoretical position assumed by Zenko, who employs a realist lens about the role of the US, its capabilities or manner in which its power can and should be understood, and where it stands in the world. Although this has little consequence regarding the author's dealings with the cases, what arguably comes across as a core misconception of power should be noted. Mention is made of the balance of power and state survival but how this more precisely fits with DMOs might become the core of future studies. The discussion of preference by the US military institution for large-scale wars over DMOs

resonates throughout this work. While others prefer the use of DMOs for such reasons as their being immediately responsive tools of statecraft and their disassociation with high levels of US and target-state casualties raises interesting questions about rifts within the US institutional fabric. One question that seemingly goes unanswered, however, is why the US government should be willing to have others perceive it as one that is willing to use force quickly.

The author has decided to treat the US as the primary military hegemon in the world. Not contesting the notion that no other state is able to stand up to the US in purely military terms, his treatment of the US as a power within a system of unipolarity might prove somewhat problematic to some. Little regard is given to competing states and political or military organizations' influence in the face of or over the US in spite of its overwhelming military presence. Zenko's treatment of American DMOs beginning in 1991 leads to a coalescence of critical periods of US political and military operations that necessarily should have been divided into particular periods of time. The period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the post-9/11 era, and the post-post-9/11 world is lumped into a single category described as the post-Cold War world. This categorical amalgamation seems problematic on account of the author referring to US foreign policy and decision-makers having faced a "radically changed international landscape" while simultaneously asserting that "there has been little variation in America's declared national interests and security threats" (7).

While some of the characteristics of this work might lend themselves easily to criticism, they should not be considered weaknesses in what is a neatly compiled and authoritative study. Indeed, a very clear question is answered in a cogent manner, supported well with empirical research and a broad range of sources, and valuable policy recommendations. Zenko's work, which features a praiseworthy coding and description of cases regarding DMOs, and US non-use of DMOs during the same period of time (1991 to June 1, 2009), should unequivocally find a very nice position within the realms of IR, security studies, and strategic and military studies, while even lending itself analytically to those beyond the academic realm.

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