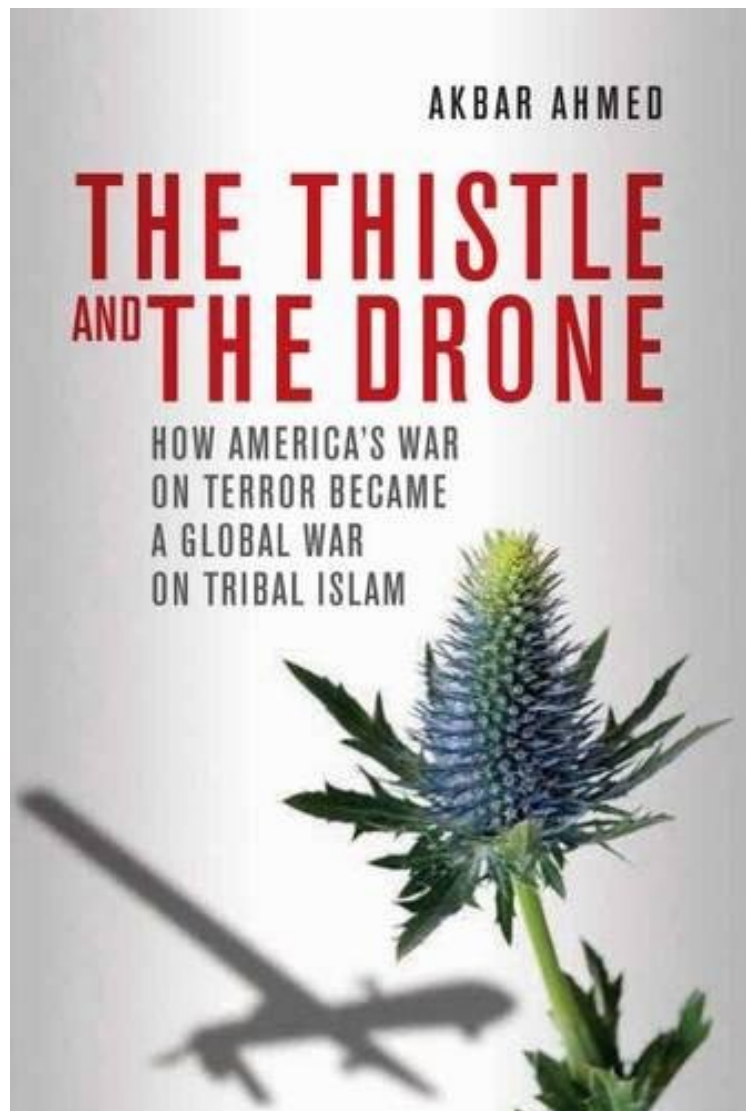


[Mobile library] The Thistle and the Drone: How America's War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam

The Thistle and the Drone: How America's War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam

Akbar Ahmed

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As an Australian whose nation's past conservative Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser (who sent my generation to Vietnam in the sixties) has just published a book confirming that our joint facility in Australia's west, Pine Gap, plays an important role in targeting those who die under the drones' attacks, I must say this book is a real eye-opener. Read it if you have any doubts about extra-judicial killings. Remember, if we can do it to them, they can do it one day to us. Hmmmmm!

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the United States declared war on terrorism. More than ten years later, the results are decidedly mixed. Here world-renowned author, diplomat, and scholar Akbar Ahmed reveals an important yet largely ignored result of this war: in many nations it has exacerbated the already broken relationship between central governments and the largely rural Muslim tribal societies on the peripheries of both Muslim and non-Muslim nations. The center and the periphery are engaged in a mutually destructive civil war across the globe, a conflict that has been intensified by the war on terror. Conflicts between governments and tribal societies predate the war on terror in many regions, from South Asia to the Middle East to North Africa, pitting those in the centers of power against those who live in the outlying provinces. Akbar Ahmed's unique study demonstrates that this conflict between the center and the periphery has entered a new and dangerous stage with U.S. involvement after 9/11 and the deployment of drones, in the hunt for al Qaeda, threatening the very existence of many tribal societies. American firepower and its vast anti-terror network have turned the war on terror into a global war on tribal Islam. And too often the victims are innocent children at school, women in their homes, workers simply trying to earn a living, and worshipers in their mosques. Battered by military attacks or drone strikes one day and suicide bombers the next, the tribes bemoan, "Every day is like 9/11 for us." In *The Thistle and the Drone*, the third volume in Ahmed's groundbreaking trilogy examining relations between America and the Muslim world, the author draws on forty case studies representing the global span of Islam to demonstrate how the U.S. has become involved directly or indirectly in each of these societies. The study provides the social and historical context necessary to understand how both central governments and tribal societies have become embroiled in America's war. Beginning with Waziristan and expanding to societies in Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere, Ahmed offers a fresh approach to the conflicts studied and presents an unprecedented paradigm for understanding and winning the war on terror. *The Thistle and the Drone* was the 2013 Foreword Reviews Gold winner for Political Science.

"In the end, I was close to tears. *Lagrimas caudales* or "flowing tears," to use the apposite phrase of Blas de Otero, seems to be what the book's conclusions lead to.... Thus *lagrimas* for the tribes, for the soldiers, and for the United States.... Akbar Ahmed gives us the only way out of this dangerous dilemma, a way to coexist with the thistle without the drone." Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, professor of government and public policy at the College of William and Mary "I am moved, horrified, and encouraged all at once. Above all, Professor Ahmed makes me proud to be an anthropologist!" Professor Marilyn Strathern D.B.E., former William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge "Ahmed's years of field experience and study, as a government official in tribal Pakistan, as an anthropologist, and as a leading authority on traditional Islam, make him uniquely qualified to offer this timely, balanced, and well-argued analysis of the interaction between modern drone warfare and the tribal peoples it targets. This book should be required reading for any policymaker, student, or military officer seeking to understand the risks and dilemmas of today's conflict." Colonel David Kilcullen, author of *The Accidental Guerilla*, reviewing a previous edition or volume "From Akbar Ahmed, one of the wisest Muslim heads I know, a brilliant deconstruction of America's drone attacks on targets in Pakistan and other Muslim societies across the world. His cogent account of how each attack detonates tribal threads, alienating and radicalizing whole communities still further, is a must-read." Jon Snow, presenter Channel 4/ITN News "The Thistle and the Drone... makes a clear argument that the president and his advisers are putting the al-Qaeda cart before the tribal horse." Malise Ruthven, *The New York Times* "The Thistle and the Drone reminds the intelligence professional of the importance of understanding local culture and history as the start point for any successful counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operation.... by far the greater value of this book lies in the detailed examples Ahmed provides of various tribal communities around the world. Avoiding the esoteric, he provides data useful to the diplomat, intelligence officer, or warrior engaged in political actions or operations in nearly every part of the Islamic world." J.R. Seeger, retired CIA National Clandestine Service officer, CIA.gov Library, Center for the Study of Intelligence "This is an important book that deserves the attention of scholars as well as policy makers." Thomas H. Johnson, Research Professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, *The Middle East Journal* About the Author Akbar Ahmed is the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University in Washington, D.C. He was the former Pakistani high commissioner to the United Kingdom, the first Distinguished Chair of Middle East Studies at the U.S. Naval Academy, and is a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Among his previous books are *Journey into Islam* and *Journey into America*, both published by Brookings. He is also a published poet and playwright.