

Incredible Prediction of Drone Warfare from 1937!

February 4, 2002, was the [first time](#) a Predator drone was used for a targeted killing. Since then, much has been written and debated about drone warfare.

From a pragmatic, military perspective, drones make sense. Why risk your soldiers' lives if there is another option? Drones can also stay aloft for incredible lengths of time, providing air cover and support that was only dreamed of in the past. In an age without clear battle lines, when enemies are moving in and out of vast geographic areas and even crossing international borders, drones obviously can play an important role.

But something about the idea of a drone, piloted from thousands of miles away and firing high explosives for targeted killings, rubs many people the wrong way. There is something of an unsoldierly feel to it. It's as if there is no honor in it in the same way that using the machine gun against samurai had no honor. While the fight is won, the victory seems to go to the machine and not man.

There's also the [collateral damage](#). Wars will always have collateral damage, particularly with the power of modern weaponry, but drones seem particularly vulnerable to critiques.

Whatever the case, in considering drones, this quotation from Georges Bernanos' famous novel *Diary of a Country Priest* (1937) seems especially prescient for its time:

"The cleverest killers of tomorrow will kill without any risk. Thirty thousand feet above the earth, any dirty little engineer, sitting cozily in his slippers with a special bodyguard of technicians, will merely have to press a button

to wipe out a town, and scurry home in fear – his only fear – of being late for dinner. Nobody could call an employee of that description a soldier. Can he even deserve to be called ‘an army man’? ... Has our trade become so debased that we are no longer responsible for any one of our actions, that we share in the horrible innocence of our steel machines?”

Again, that’s from 1937!