

without the lives of American soldiers being put at risk. But even twenty-first-century technology doesn't ensure that only the bad guys die or that the right bad guys are always the targets. Rockets sometimes misfire, and targets sometimes get misidentified. Collateral damage is unavoidable: innocents will also die, including children. On occasion American citizens may find themselves in the firing line. Drone warfare is still a horribly dirty business. There will be lots of blood.

An American president who refused even to contemplate using drone technology on the grounds that people might die would be, as Weber has it, no sort of politician. Politicians do sometimes have to kill people to save lives. But that in itself doesn't justify the use of drones. There are enormous risks to this kind of streamlined, remote-controlled violence. One is that it appears sanitised: it tempts politicians into thinking that they have chosen the safe option and to forget that even the safe option is hideously unpleasant for the people on the receiving end. It can also be excessively rationalised: the immediate calculus of lives lost to lives saved is only one consideration in a messy and complex situation. Efficient, cost-effective killing machines encourage a bureaucratic mindset to take hold at the expense of political judgement. (Another group that Weber thought ill qualified to be politicians were professional soldiers: they were too used to thinking of violence in terms of its efficiency.) Whenever political violence is deployed, there is more than just its cost-effectiveness to consider. What about America's long-term reputation? What about the resentments that build up

over time and produce uncontrolled violence much further down the line? What about the collateral damage to America's allies? Even Danes have not been immune to the fall-out: Danish politicians have not sent armed drones out into the world, but they have been tasked with providing some of the intelligence that helps identify the targets for these strikes. The rationalisation of violence spreads insidiously. Responsibility is parcelled out until no one is in a position to say no.



What might it mean to take responsibility for a drone strike? Obama can say that he agonises about it, that he feels the death of every innocent, that he never reaches such a decision lightly. But in the end it's his call, and he must judge what's best for America. Yet how different is this from washing his hands of personal responsibility? We have to take it on trust that he feels bad about it. But is feeling bad about it enough to make it all right? The problem goes beyond mere Machiavellianism, because so many different