WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?: THE RHETORIC OF NUMBERS DURING WARTIME

A Dissertation in
Communication Arts & Sciences

by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2014
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the rhetorical use of numbers in the public discourse of war. Following the history of American wars beginning with the Civil War and proceeding through the current War on Terror, numbers are used but rarely investigated for their rhetorical potential. As an inventional resource, rhetors can use numbers to limit deliberation or discussion of an issue, or rhetors can use numbers in order to open a space for greater democratic deliberation. The rhetorical use of numbers in pro- and antiwar rhetorics is worth examining in depth and it is important to put these divergent uses of numbers to support or challenge war in conversation because by doing so, we see a contrast in motives. This dissertation accounts for three different motives associated with the use of numbers in war rhetoric: commemoration, control, and deliberation. The three motives operate simultaneously and are not taken to be mutually exclusive. To uncover these motives, I first offer a genealogy of numbers in war rhetoric, beginning with the Civil War and moving through the 20th century. Next, I explore how numbers are marshaled in contemporary anti- and pro-war rhetorics in the War on Terror. Within the War on Terror discussion, I offer an apparatus for judging the use of numbers in war rhetoric, focusing on three criteria: accuracy, transparency, and magnitude. With the criteria in mind, it is easier for the public to broach discussion, and create a space to challenge the rhetorical use of numbers and engage in a discussion of the ethical and financial costs of war.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ........................................................................................................... v

**Introduction**  Investigating the Rhetorical Power of Numbers in War .............................. 1

**Chapter 1**  *Numbers and the Civil War: Biopolitics and the Commemorative Motive* ....... 31

- Dealing with the Growing Dead: The Link Between Numbers and Remembering ............ 33
- Burying the Dead and the Rise of Numbers in the Civil War ........................................... 42
- Biopolitics and the War for the Whole of the People ......................................................... 45
- Citizenship and the Re-articulation of the Contract of Blood ........................................... 50

**Chapter 2**  Numbers in the Wars of the 20th Century .......................................................... 63

- Numbers in the World Wars ................................................................................................. 65
  - Democratic Theory Around the First World War ............................................................ 73
- The Cold War and the Rise of Experts .............................................................................. 78
- Vietnam, Rationalization, and the Growing Power of Numbers ........................................ 88
- Summary .............................................................................................................................. 97

**Chapter 3**  Commemoration and Control in the War on Terror: The Bush and Obama
  Administration’s Use of Numbers ......................................................................................... 109

- President Bush’s Expansion of the War on Terror ............................................................. 115
- Criteria for Judging the Use of Numerical Rhetorics ........................................................ 117
- Numbers in the Age of Drones .......................................................................................... 124
  - Numerical Rhetorics and the Unenumerated ................................................................. 126
- The Government’s Attempt to Reassert Control Through Numerical Rhetorics .......... 130
- National Defense University and the Future of the War on Terror .............................. 138

**Chapter 4**  Anti-War Numbers and the Deliberative Motive ................................................ 156

- Anti-War Efforts Following 9/11 Through Iraq ................................................................. 160
- Human Rights Watch, Numbers, and International Humanitarian Law ....................... 165
  - Non-Governmental Counting in Iraq ............................................................................. 167
- Les Roberts and the Awe-inspiring Numbers .................................................................. 172
- Iraq Body Count: Methodology for Better Accuracy ....................................................... 182
- The Bureau for Investigative Journalism: Counting the Secret Drone War ................. 185
- Counting and Debating the Costs of War ....................................................................... 189

**Conclusion: How to Account for Numbers in War** .............................................................. 204

**Bibliography** ......................................................................................................................... 216
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As a graduate student studying rhetoric at Penn State, I have been fortunate to be a part of an excellent and generous scholarly community that also happens to be the largest groups of academic rhetoricians concentrated on one campus. I have benefited enormously from this exceptional community and, as a consequence, I have many people to thank. Before I name some individuals below, I want to point out that the community they sustain has helped me through this process in more ways than I can articulate here and that I am very lucky to get to say so.

I am grateful for the support of a number of Penn State faculty. Stephen Browne, J. Michael Hogan, and Matt Jordan all served as committee members throughout my Ph.D. and I have turned to each of them for insight and advice on this project and other professional matters. Through the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences, as well as the Institute for the Arts and Humanities, I have received support in writing the dissertation. For than five years, Jeremy Engels has advised me in the pursuit of doctorate and a career as an academic. His guidance and patience have been invaluable to me.

In addition to Penn State’s esteemed rhetoric faculty, I am also grateful for the support of its outstanding community of rhetoric graduate students, many of who are close friends. Conversations with Bryan Blankfield, Jeremy Cox, Cory Geraths, Anne Harries, Jeremy Johnson, Kyle King, Vincent Pham, and William Saas throughout the dissertation process have helped keep me sane and productive.

I am continually amazed by the encouragement of my family and friends, many of who have supported my academic adventure from start to finish.
Introduction

Investigating the Rhetorical Power of Numbers in War

IN the old wars drum of hoofs and the beat of shod feet.
In the new wars hum of motors and the tread of rubber tires.
In the wars to come silent wheels and whirr of rods not
yet dreamed out in the heads of men.
-Carl Sandburg, “Wars,” in War Poems (1914-1915)

Numbers play a fundamental role in how we learn about and remember wars. Numbers allow wars to be remembered in a simple format (e.g., 2.5 million men enlisted in the Civil War, 750,000 died); they can also abstract out the negative elements of war (e.g., civilian deaths). The rhetoricity of numbers has been an underexamined area of public discourse, especially in wartime. This dissertation project brings numbers and counting into the realm of rhetorical criticism. My goal is to show that how we count not only affects civic perceptions of war, but also changes the ways in which government views their obligation toward the dead. Included in this dissertation are a discussion of how administrations use numbers to promote war, how antiwar groups marshal numbers in support of their cause, and how numbers are closely tied to other pathos-laden arguments instead of the strictly logos-based realm of public discourse. I will demonstrate that numbers and counting do not have to remain an abstraction of identity, robbing one of a full life only to be replaced by a number. Instead, numbers can and should play a central role in public deliberation about war. My analysis of the rhetoricity of numbers will show how citizens can engage in more productive conversations about war, and how citizens can better understand how numbers operate in political discussions.

In this dissertation, I first offer a genealogy of the use and abuse of numbers in war rhetoric, beginning with the Civil War and moving through the 20th century. Next, I will explore
how numbers are marshaled in contemporary anti- and pro-war rhetorics in the War on Terror. The focus of this project extends the work being done on the discourse of war by rhetorical critics, but it focuses on the often-overlooked role that counting plays in the promotion of, and protest against, war. Though numbers are an ever-present feature of our day-to-day lives, we often overlook how they function conceptually and rhetorically. How does the government use the process of counting and commemorating the war dead to further the cause of war? What role do individual citizens have in debating the decisions to go to war? Related to that, in what way do governments’ investment in experts and a quantitative orientation isolate citizens? How does the government establish control over the use of numbers? To what end does war drive the necessity to count and a biopolitical mindset? What tools are available to citizens to criticize and engage an administration’s use of numbers? Educating citizens has been a goal of rhetorical scholars for much of the twenty- and twenty-first centuries, and I hope that my project will contribute to this goal by helping citizens better understand the rhetoric of counting. Indeed, I believe that learning how to rhetorically critique the use of numbers in war and how such criticism functions in anti-war rhetoric is a vital skill for democratic citizens today. A practical goal of this dissertation will therefore be to provide a more complete understanding of how numbers operate in arguments for and against war to enable citizens to engage in critical discussions.

In his 1828 book, *Elements of Rhetoric*, Richard Whately argues that rhetoric is concerned with making and ordering arguments. Although it involves logic, Whately offers rhetoric as “an off-shoot of Logic” that is used to reveal a priori truths. Whately’s work, as well as his 1826 *The Elements of Logic*, inspired a revival of the study of logic in England in the early nineteenth century, and reaffirmed a place for spoken rhetoric during a time where the belles-lettres movement had gained ground. In the introduction to *Elements of Rhetoric*, Douglas Ehninger writes that Whately’s view is that logic is the “methodology of proof,” and that rhetoric is constantly used as “the application of that methodology in actual attempts to influence.”
When discussing the arguments used in rhetoric, Whately notes that the rhetor’s job is not to create data, but to use it. He writes, “But it is evident that, in all cases alike, the *data* we argue *from* must be something already existing, and which we are not to make, but to use.”

Surprisingly, in his lengthy discussion of arguments, including an extended discussion of forms of proof, including examples and analogies, Whately does not mention the use of numbers. This is significant, not simply because Whately is generally recognized as a pivotal figure in the history of rhetorical theory, but also because his oversight is at once in step with the rhetorical tradition—which too rarely investigates the rhetoric of numbers—and out of step with his times. Indeed, by the time Whately had written his two books on logic and rhetoric in the early nineteenth century, the role of numbers was becoming increasingly important to politics in an age when government began to focus its attention on the regulation of populations. Whately thus sits at a historical precipice. From his day forward, counting has been central to politics, and to political rhetoric.

Since the early eighteenth century, numbers—in the work of demographers, census takers, and public opinion pollsters—have become central to the operation of political bureaucracies. What started as the work of amateurs collecting and analyzing information about the size and scope of national resources soon became the business of governments, and it contributed to the proliferation of numbers by governments. Michel Foucault describes these moves by governments to organize their subjects as “governmentality.” Foucault’s focus with governmentality brings together government and rationality, and numbers are central to the rationalities of the West. Extending beyond the realm of politics, Foucault believes that governments had an interest in controlling populations. One of the ways in which governments control their populations is through a process he calls “biopolitics.” Biopolitics is concerned with the health and welfare of populations, and thus thinks in terms of counting and numbers. The growth of biopolitics was fueled by "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for
achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations. Biopolitics has become engrained in nearly every facet of governments over the last century, where the power of the modern state has been exercised on entire populations in every aspect of human lives.

Following Foucault’s work and focusing on the twentieth century, Nikolas Rose writes that numbers have an “unmistakable power in modern government.” He claims that numbers are used in at least four different ways: to establish political legitimacy through election results; to align governmental action through the use of polls; to form judgments about political authority and stewardship of national life though indicators of the economy, divorce rate, and death rate; and, to make contemporary governance possible, as seen in measures of population size and the tax rate used to fund governmental actions. Numbers are everywhere, in opinion polls, in exit polls, in calculations of budgets, in death tolls following natural disasters, or in the context of battle. Much of the time such numbers are taken for granted by the public. In this dissertation, I will examine the importance of numbers used in war rhetoric, and examine the rhetorical functions that numbers and quantification have on the functioning of the democratic process. I will use the methods of rhetorical criticism to show how citizens can engage in more productive conversations about war, and how citizens can better understand how numbers operate in political discussions.

In the early 19th century, governments began to consume, produce, and control numbers that helped define their countries. Ian Hacking suggests that it was with the "avalanche of printed numbers" that national governments began to conceptualize their capacities. By answering questions like how many people can wheat production sustain, or what is the average life expectancy of a citizen, a government could then ask, “How many men could be sent to war?” The "professional lust for precision in measurement" began in the most common areas of "manufacture, mining, health, trade, railways, war, and empire.” An over-reliance on numerical representation of human life can result in an abstraction of identity and a reliance on rationalized
thought, which involved turning full lives into mere numbers and outputs. This process raises ethical questions over the ends to which numbers are put, and how closely decision-makers respect how the numbers represent individual citizens. Systematic collection of data about people in the contemporary age has affected the ways in which societies are conceptualized. Further still, it has changed the ways that citizens describe themselves, as the flood of numbers, statistics and probability "transformed what we choose to do, who we try to be, and what we think of ourselves."\textsuperscript{12}

The control and use of numbers by governments has important rhetorical implications that need to be addressed.\textsuperscript{13} With the increase of statistical representation, and the increasing power that probability has in determining policy, we must investigate what happens when we begin allow computation to drive our judgments. The ethical dilemma moves beyond the more obvious violence done with numbers, violence visible in the eugenics movement and the controlling of 'deviant' populations. In war, the decision about whether or not to bomb a village, or launch a drone strike against a suspected high-value target, now includes calculations related to civilian casualties. How the military counts these deaths, how forward they are regarding them, and how they make efforts to eliminate civilian casualties can be told in who does the counting, and who ends up qualifying to be counted. Ethical questions remain when we examine the increased rationalization of governments and how they use numbers in promotion and propagation of war.

The 1920s were an important moment in American democratic theory, as the decade following World War I produced a number of debates about the lessening vibrancy of democratic culture and the public’s ability to engage in the debate. The most famous debate took place between Walter Lippmann and John Dewey. Although both observe a similar problem—that the modern democratic public lacks knowledge—they explain the problem in different ways and, as might be expected, offered divergent solutions. In \textit{Public Opinion}, Lippmann discusses the
increasing complexity of the news and the public’s inability to understand their mediated worlds. Lippmann writes, “Democracy in its original form never seriously faced the problem which arises because the pictures inside people’s heads do not automatically correspond with the world outside.” The only hope for Lippmann is to elevate the experts to the role of rulers, so as not to overburden the less-than-omnicompetent citizenry.

In *The Public and Its Problems*, published five years after *Public Opinion*, John Dewey expresses his faith in the potential for the public to come together as a community to solve their problems. Dewey grants that citizens exhibit a lack of understanding of the complexities and interrelationships of modern societies, and this precludes effective efforts to solve them. He observes, “At present, many consequences are felt rather than perceived; they are suffered, but they cannot be said to be known, for they are not, by those who experience them, referred to their origins.” This closely mirrors the experiences of the average citizen today who feels the effects of the economic downturn—perhaps by defaulting on their mortgage or finding themselves unable to receive a loan. These citizens feel the impact of the crisis, but are unable to comprehend its causes. Unlike Lippmann, Dewey finds potential in the American public to understand the complex world if they are empowered to address questions that affect their lives, and if they have the necessary information. “A technical high-brow presentation would appeal only to the technically high-brow; it would not be news to the masses. Presentation is fundamentally important, and presentation is a question of art,” he writes. Thus, with the building of community ties and careful application of rhetoric to make sense of the world, Dewey maintains optimism for the over-burdened modern citizen. Here, I maintain Dewey’s optimism in the face of Lippmann’s civic defeatism. If numbers are given context, if citizens can put faces and names to those killed in war, then we may begin to the process of making these discussions accessible to citizens.
Theoretical Architecture and Assumptions

When discussing the rhetoric of numbers in this dissertation, I will focus on the most prominent rhetorical uses of numbers, which include circulation of statistics, polling information, discussion of budgets, and how citizens and presidents adapt to growing body counts. Statistics is one way that numbers are harnessed rhetorically. The rhetorical nature stems in part from the fact that numbers and statistics—even from official sources—do not hold a mirror to reality but instead reflect, and deflect, it. As William Alonso and Paul Starr write, statistics “reflect presuppositions and theories about the nature of society.” In this vein, statistics are the products of “social, political, and economic interests” that are often in conflict. Political judgments determine what to measure, how to measure it, and how to interpret the results. As such, it is important not only to consider what is counted and how it is used, but also to examine what is not counted, and the reasons behind the omission. As Lippmann and Dewey recognized, the United States is a democracy that deals with representation and recognition, and at times the citizens are struggling to make sense of complicated realities. Thus for many, it is easy enough to assume that what is not counted is not there.

The theoretical foundations of the dissertation will focus on the uses and effects of numbers in war discourse. In this dissertation I will examine how the production and distribution of numbers affects politics and society. The works of Foucault will play an important role in understanding the impact that increased quantification has had on contemporary discourse. Central to this are his ideas of governmentality and biopolitics. As a driving force for modern governments, biopolitics aims at controlling populations. In order to justify the process rationally, the state frames its actions as a form of preserving life. We see this in the perpetuation of war, taking preemptive action to preserve the future loss of human life. Engaging with Foucault’s work necessitates an eye toward history. The opposition to war also takes the form of arguments
about numbers, sometimes countering biopolitics with biopolitics. In each chapter that will be a search for precedent in use of numbers and the rhetorical decisions to change how they are collected or disseminated.

As obvious as that initial explanation of biopower appears, the details of the concept are contestable, and the term is used to cover topics ranging from eugenics and psychiatric care to the value of human life (e.g., Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*) and applications for new biotechnological developments that can affect the growth of life. Throughout the diverse interpretations of biopolitics, it is clear that biopolitics does affect the core of politics. As Thomas Lemke notes, “Biopolitics is not the expression of the sovereign will but aims at the administration and regulation of life processes on the level of populations. It focuses on living beings rather than on legal subjects—or, to be more precise, it deals with legal subjects that are at the same time living beings.” To understand biopolitics, then, one is required to observe a border between life and politics. As is frequently the case in the work of Foucault, this border is to be simultaneously respected and overcome. Working within the confines of biopolitics, there is an area where human life is organized into categories of knowledge and power. In other words, this dissertation will examine manifestations of biopower, in the way the government counts and promotes life through the counting the dead in the Civil War, through the decisions to utilize drones to kill suspected militants.

**Rhetorical Examination of Numbers**

The Lippmann and Dewey debate that served as the foundation of political communication continued fifty years later in rhetorical studies. Thomas Farrell describes what sort of “knowledge” was pertinent “to the practical art of rhetoric” and necessary for deliberative debate, and he calls this “social knowledge,” which he defines as “relationships among problems,
persons, interests, and actions, which imply (when accepted) certain notions of preferable public behavior.”20 In opposition to technical or specialized knowledge, which is “perceived correspondence to the external world,” social knowledge is “actualized through the decision and action of the audience.”21 Farrell sees social knowledge as holding the ability to be “rhetorically impactful,” but it is audience dependent. Social knowledge must rest upon basic assumptions of “audience consensus on certain problems, interests, and actions.”22 Farrell’s vision of social knowledge opens up a place for average citizens to participate in the ongoing deliberation process. Once citizens are given this rhetorical knowledge, there is an imperative toward choice and action. Like Dewey, Farrell envisions social knowledge as a means of transforming society into a community, drawing citizens together and enabling participation in a public realm.

Building on Farrell’s work, G. Thomas Goodnight examines the effects of the personal and technical spheres intruding where there should be public spheres of argument. Goodnight notes that there are times when arguments from the technical sphere will move into the public sphere. Instead of relying strictly on the forms of judgment that are used in the technical realm, the technical-turned-public forum “would provide a tradition of argument such that its speakers would employ common language, values, and reasoning so that the disagreement could be settled to the satisfaction of all concerned.”23 Goodnight describes how the technocratic sphere pushed the average citizen farther and farther away from the decisions being made. In this dissertation, I will examine how citizens can respond to the technical spheres to reestablish their place in important political discussions.

The use of statistics has a history in rhetoric and is important in the current day, but some of history is hidden in public speaking textbooks. Our public speaking students are taught that statistics are useful way to make a powerful impression. In his textbook, David Zarefsky writes that if one wants to “generalize beyond a few specific examples” and thus “make a powerful statements about larger populations,” statistics are the preferred method.24 Students are further
told that statistics “provide some of the most precise information available to public speakers.”\textsuperscript{25} One of the main components of using statistics as evidence, and one that is consistently lacking in public dissemination of statistics, is the need to make the numbers meaningful.\textsuperscript{26} Though instructed to do so as students, public officials do not often remind the audience what the statistic itself means. What is missing is the description of what the numbers represent, and whether or not they are exceeding expectations. For over 60 years, Darrell Huff has written about \textit{How to Lie with Statistics}, introducing the general reader the most common ways people lie, both intentionally and unintentionally, with statistical interpretations that lead to erroneous conclusions.\textsuperscript{27} The concept of deceptive numbers has long been engrained in the culture that even though statistics can represent precision or authority, it just as easily represents false intentions. Mark Twain penned one of the lasting and most damning critiques of the use of numbers in his “Chapters from My Autobiography. In 1906, he wrote, "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics."\textsuperscript{28} Part of the distrust that citizens feel toward numbers in rhetoric stems from the use, and sometimes abuse, that occurs when governments use numbers.

Rhetorical critics have also engaged numbers when looking at polling data and the uses to which it is put. J. Michael Hogan and Ted J. Smith III examined national polls surrounding the nuclear freeze movement and found that while the movement scored many victories, and even succeeded in getting resolutions passed in favor of the freeze, the overwhelming public support they cited was not there. The public's support for the freeze “came heavily qualified,” as Americans expressed support for the concept of the freeze but were skeptical that a balanced agreement could be reached.\textsuperscript{29} In the case of the freeze movement, proponents claimed vast support when most Americans paid very little attention to the debates at all. During the debate over the Panama Canal Treaties, public opinion was again claimed to be in support of the treaties, while analysts have shown the opposite to be true. Smith III and Hogan find the problem lies with the media interpretation of the polls. Because the “amount, style, and quality of coverage” varied
greatly when covering the treaty talks, it became more difficult for the American public to receive an accurate interpretation of the polls.\textsuperscript{30} Hogan and Smith III’s discussion of polling shows it is important role that numbers have on public discourse, but emphasize that is important to understand how the polls were created, worded, and how the results are taken up in the media.

Susan Herbst notes that numbers in public discourse are used to accomplish two distinct but intertwined functions. On the one hand, we quantify in order to “act in the most efficient manner possible,” recalling Weber’s theorizing of rationalization. On the other hand, we use numbers in order to communicate authority in public debate.\textsuperscript{31} Of particular import during the War on Terror is understanding how numbers that appear unprejudiced by ideology are in fact laden with meaning. While the use of statistics and numbers appears objective, and can be used in an attempt to gain trust, we must understand what is lost in the move to quantify phenomena. Although counting may be the most efficient means to many ends, much is lost in the abstraction.

\textbf{The Rhetoric of the “War on Terror”}

Rhetorical scholars have dedicated much time to investigating the rhetoric used to propel the United States into the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. They have provided us with an understanding of how governments are able to utilize fear in productive fashions, while also encouraging its citizens to go about their daily routines, remaining unfazed by the costs that the wars produce. The results of governmental discourses has been a move toward anti-democratic practices becoming commonplace. The work of some rhetorical scholars has focused on the way administration rhetoric has attempted to stymie deliberative discourse, the power of the president, and the formation of the enemy.

Rhetorical critics have been concerned with how administration rhetoric during the War on Terror has constrained the possibilities for civic deliberation and, especially, mobilization
against the war effort. Donovan Conley and William Saas’ “Occultatio: The Bush
Administration’s Rhetorical War” focuses our attention to signing statements, redactions, as well
as processes of stonewalling and legalese to produces a mystification meant to confound the
citizenry.32 Roger Stahl evaluates how the phrase “Support the Troops” redefined war as a fight to
save the soldier instead of understanding war as a policy decision. He argues that the phrase turns
any dissent from the war policy into a “profoundly immoral act tantamount to attacking the
soldier.”33 Jeremy Engels’ examination of the National Security Strategy of the United States
(NSSUS) is concerned with the politics of space. He argues that after 9/11, given the norms of
global capital and “heterotopia,” it has become more difficult for political leaders to define a
national enemy because these enemies outside of traditional nation-state boundaries. The Bush
administration solved this problem by deliberately confusing the terms “pirate” and “terrorist”
(which in international law are distinct), a move that, he concludes, has conflated state power and
economic power into the force of empire.34

Stahl’s discussion in Militainment, Inc. shows how the messages of U.S. leaders and the
media during the War on Terror have served to help Americans identify with a specific
perspective meant to unify them and direct their response. He describes the way the new
interactive mode of militarized entertainment is recruiting its audience as virtual-citizen soldiers.
These moves result in demilitarizing the citizen as one that actually has to fight in the military,
but may still be surrounded in a “first-person relationship with the war,” and a means by which
civic energy is directed “away from actual participation in war policy or deliberation.”35 Stephen
J. Hartnett and Laura Stengrim uncover similar effects of the Bush Doctrine of pre-eminent
strikes. The authors state that the Bush Doctrine is an “anti-deliberative discourse strategy,” and
includes a “broad set of prescriptions for globalization-through-benevolent-empire.”36 The focus
on empire emerged as Hartnett and Stengrim state that the only way to understand war was by
examining how “globalization, empire and their accompanying rhetorical justifications have produced contexts ripe for violence.”

In my dissertation, I will examine how the methods and reasons for counting—and not counting—war dead can deepen the democratic divide between our justifications for war and the aftermath of such efforts. The ways that the United States represents the war dead impact how its citizens discuss the country’s actions, and can impinge on the ability to critically reflect on the consequences. Further, by examining the rhetorical constructions of the war dead in the National Cemetery System, by tracing the development of quantitative decision making in war, by analyzing how citizens are forced out of the conversation through in investment in experts and a growing technical sphere, by unpacking the decision whether or not the government should provide a number to debate, by providing an apparatus to judge numerical rhetorics, and by examining how anti-war groups marshal numbers to promote deliberation, I will demonstrate how numbers can be used war rhetoric to stymy public debate, as well as how numbers can be used to bring the war debate back to the realm of public concern and control.

Some critics have focused on the changing role and the power of the presidency during the War on Terror. John Murphy argues that the September 11 address from the Oval Office defined Bush’s role as a reassuring figure for the nation, informing the country that his administration was already in motion to find out who committed the attacks and what would be done about it. Murphy points out that this functioned like Reagan’s Challenger speech in the way that Bush felt the need to “define the meaning of 9/11 and we felt the need to understand this horrific event.” According to Murphy, Bush utilized epideictic rhetoric exclusively in the aftermath of 9/11 to help shape our vision of the events, and stand in for the people synecdochically. Murphy notes that Bush’s uses of epideictic rhetoric allowed him to create and audience and endow it with the qualities needed to support the war. Bush framed America as civilized, contrasted with al Qaeda as barbaric. Bush felt that policy of retaliation was “justified
not by expediency but by metaphysical end—by character and faith.” Thus, Bush defined the world in terms of good and evil, and attempted to embody the American people, thus becoming the “good incarnate.”

Stephen Hartnett and Jennifer Mercieca continued the focus on the power of the presidency. Through an examination of Bush’s speeches and the general tenor of presidential discourse during the War on Terror, Hartnett and Mercieca pronounced the death of the rhetorical presidency and the birth of the post-rhetorical presidency. One tenet Hartnett and Mercieca point to is the banality of current presidential discourse, and it is one that conforms to the public relation tactics in an attempt to “confuse public opinion, prevent citizen action, and frustrate citizen deliberation.”

A second component of the post-rhetorical presidency is the U.S. escalation of “imperial ambition, so the White House has chosen not to explain its policies to citizens but to distract them so that an imperial president can act as ‘the decider’ without” having to be held accountable to Congress, the Supreme Court, or the American people. Such elusions away from public discourse bring our attention to the control and commemorative rhetorics that can be deployed and the purposes behind numerical deployments. The pursuit of two wars went unaccounted for in the national budget, and was pushed aside by the Bush administration, which took a budget surplus in 2000 to a deficit of $307 billion by 2004. If masked in commemorative rhetoric, a deployment of numbers or even unenumerated rhetoric can constitute a form of what Mercieca calls “epideictic violence,” a discourse that is meant to celebrate and promote certain values while silencing opponents and disabling criticism.

Another theme for rhetorical critics is the construction of the enemy in the War on Terror. Robert Ivie writes about the potential dehumanizing effects of the Bush administration’s rhetoric while it promoted to the War on Terror, and he finds that the rhetoric moved toward producing a republic of fear. The effects of the label “Axis of Evil” reveals the undemocratic portrayal of an Other as an enemy, as evil incarnate, “hyperinflates narrow-minded patriotism,” which in turn
“dampens the democratic spirit and thus the marketplace of ideas” to create an “oppressive environment of fear and intimidation.” Ivie remains optimistic regarding the potential for rhetoric to affect more direct democratic action. Ivie notes that we are not used to thinking of rhetoric as a positive force in democracy, as most in the popular press, and even the politicians themselves, use the term pejoratively. One of the democratic ends is the use of identification to draw the diverse world and its members together into a discussion. If one tilts too far toward an antagonistic mindset, where the Other is dehumanized, there is no recourse for dialogue. My investigation of the rhetorical use of numbers will look at the identification aspect that is frequently annulled when people are represented as numbers instead of full persons with histories and families.

Rhetorical critics of war frequently find themselves investigating the efforts of an administration to sustain support for the war. In a forum piece that offers an inquiry into what they term “the new war rhetoric,” Jeremy Engels and William Saas argue that the dependence upon an assent/dissent binary is misleading in the War on Terror. Some politicians today have realized what they need is just passive acceptance, rather than robust support from the populace for war. Engels and Saas write that the “for/against distinction” is overridden by “a general feeling of acquiescence in relation to war.” With the goal of the acquiescence to “disempower the demos and thereby preclude dissent,” no greater civil sacrifice is required from the people. Bush’s advice to the American people in the aftermath of September 11th to more-or-less “just go shopping” was an attempt to re-establish normalcy after the terrorist attack. Engels and Saas argue that the administration takes the war down a notch, moving the war out of the spotlight, focusing attention instead on the economy and other domestic issues. The power of this acquiescence rhetoric was to facilitate a return to normalcy, as well as turning the public’s attention away from the war. Based in the writings of Randolph Bourne during WWI, acquiescent rhetorics are marshaled in order to produce a feeling that dissent is pointless. Part of this feeling is
created by what Engels and Saas label the “ends-less war” that the War on Terror has become. Long fascinated and perplexed by the continual war, Engels and Saas write that the “source of endlness in the war’s distinctive lack of ends,” all of which facilitates a “numbness toward the unacceptable human costs of battle.”

In their examination of the rhetoric of the War on Terror, rhetorical scholars have shown ways in which Bush and Obama’s construction has hampered efforts of democratic deliberation and stifling the ability to even question the worthiness of war. But ultimately, rhetorical scholars have overlooked the pivotal role that numbers have played in promoting or hampering democratic deliberation about the War on Terror. In the next section, I preview the path of how this dissertation will engage the rhetoricity of numbers in wartime with a focus on motives.

Chapter Summary

This dissertation identifies three key motives of numbers in war rhetoric: control, commemoration and deliberation. Famously, Kenneth Burke turned critical attention to the study of motives. Following Burke, my examination of the use of numbers in war rhetoric is also a study of how the motives of control and commemoration “shape our understandings of ourselves and of the world.” Motives need not be understood as only relating to as a construct that shapes human behavior, frequently in a solitary, cognitive sense, and occurring prior to an act. William Benoit summarizes this interpretation of Burke by looking at a few early studies of Burke’s work, many of which place motives as prior to (or simultaneous with) action. He contrasts this interpretation with one first provided by C. Wright Mills that looks at motives in words and other actions, which in many cases follow other actions. Instead of the internal, driving definition of motives, in this dissertation I interpret motives as “accounts, linguistic devices that function to explain, justify, interpret, or rationalize action.” Motives thus can be constructed as a social
practice that removes the solitary actor and examines the larger forces at play. This interpretation will facilitate the inclusion of actions of omission as well as acts of commission in understanding how numbers are rhetorically deployed during war. The different sections will highlight how the changing situations demanded new innovations in the use of numbers.

The rhetorical use of numbers in pro- and antiwar rhetorics is worth examining in depth and it is important to put these divergent uses of numbers to support or challenge war in conversation because by doing so, we see a contrast in motives. To provoke such a conversation, the dissertation will be divided into four chapters. Chapter One will analyze the use of numbers in the American Civil War, focusing, in particular, upon how Americans interpreted and managed the war through ancient rhetorical forms associated with the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides. This chapter introduces the *commemorative motive*. I will show the commemorative motive of numerical rhetorics in war, as the government sought to use the growing numbers of dead soldiers to their own end. Chapter Two will examine the use of numbers in the wars of the twentieth century, beginning with World War I and ending with a discussion of the Cold War and Vietnam. In this chapter, I introduce the *control motive*, where the government seeks to establish itself as the sole arbiter of accurate information. The Bush and Obama administration’s handling of the War on Terror is the focus of Chapter Three. After discussing how both administrations employ the motives of commemoration and control, I offer criteria for judging numerical rhetorics, focusing on the criterion of accuracy, transparency, and magnitude. Chapter Four will focus on the work of antiwar groups, researchers, and independent journalist organizations that wield numbers to counter the government’s narrative. This chapter introduces the *deliberative motive*, which seeks to uncover hidden or rarely discussed numbers, attempting to move it into the realm of democratic deliberation. Groups like Iraq Body Count, Human Rights Watch, and the Bureau for Investigative Journalism exhibit a deliberative motive through their efforts to
count the uncounted and their efforts to illuminate the true costs of war. The conclusion will tie my discussion of motives together while offering implications for future research.

Chapter 1: Numbers and the Civil War: Biopolitics and the Commemorative Motive

The first chapter of my dissertation begins the genealogy of numbers in war rhetoric with a focus on the American Civil War—a bloodbath that completely scrambled how Americans looked at war, politics, and democracy. After the first American war with mass casualties, the nation adapted to new realities and responsibilities of how to bury and count their dead. By the war’s end, there would be nearly 750,000 total dead, and over half were unidentified. The government’s efforts to identify and reinter Union soldiers in National Cemeteries starting in 1862 reflected a change in the relationship between citizenship and death. As Lincoln noted in the Gettysburg Address, their deaths belonged to the Union, and the nation needed to know that they had not died in vain. The orders to accurately count the dead and properly inter them represented an effort to transcend the individual sacrifice and sorrow for the family in order to wrestle with the larger loss faced by the nation and society as a whole. In order to fully honor the dead, but also in order to use their deaths toward the continuation of the state, the government recognized the need to count and identify their dead. The large effort to count, rebury, and name the dead, all in the name of perpetuating the state’s fight is an example of the commemorative motive. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that both the Union and the Confederacy took steps to accurately count and identify their dead. Lincoln's creation of the National Cemetery System, as well as massive programs of re-internment and identification, demonstrates the state's interest in counting.

This chapter examines the biopolitical nature of the nation's dedicated mission to honor and account for its fallen soldiers. Foucault notes that the growth of biopolitics occurred at a time
when an “explosion of numerous and diverse techniques” allowed for the subjugation of bodies and control of the population. Focusing on the Civil War, this chapter shows how the state increased its biopolitical stake through the creation of the National Cemetery System and massive system of re-internment for other soldiers. At a time when the nation had developed an infatuation with numbers, both efforts represented a new obligation of the state, and one that we now take for granted. To build this case, the chapter turns back to the Greek experience with war through the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides. Situating American culture praxis within a broad cultural revival of interest in ancient Greek culture, I trace the changing patterns of memorialization during the middle nineteenth century that outline the commemorative motive. Epideictic rhetoric and memorialization played equal roles in how the state attempted to harness the dead to model a new form of citizenship where one is expected to give their whole life for the perpetuation of the nation. The memorializing and acknowledgment by the state of the sacrifice exemplify a motive of commemoration in the numerical rhetorics of counting and naming the war dead. Only through the careful counting and reburial of the mass causalities could the state attempt to harness their power in molding a mode of citizenship based around a post-Revolutionary War blood oath.

Chapter 2: Numbers in the Wars of the 20th Century

The biopolitical push during the Civil War gave way to a regime of numbers during World War I, as the world witnessed mass murder on a grand scale. The genealogy of numbers from that began with Civil War continues in Chapter 2 with a discussion of the wars of the 20th century. The examination of wars beginning with World War I and proceeding through Vietnam and the Cold War reveals two rhetorical motives for using numbers in war rhetoric: control and commemoration. The commemorative motive and the control motive exist side-by-side. The
control motive becomes more dominant during the twentieth century expansion of biopolitics as the government shifts away from decades of active wars and mounting death tolls to a Cold War with the aura of nuclear war with the potential for even more devastation. The discussion of the missile gap reveals a new exigence for the creation of numerical rhetorics, where the power is invested in a select few who have the knowledge and insight to deploy them. Numerical rhetorics are rhetorical deployment of numbers that are invented and invested with a meaning that often goes unevaluated.

In the case study of World War I (WWI), we see how the war brought forth death on a massive scale not yet seen in the 20th century. The biopolitical push during the Civil War gave way to a regime of numbers during World War I, as the world witnessed mass murder on a grand scale. The frightening death tolls experienced in the United States during the Civil War only scratched the surface of sorrow wrought by the "mechanized killing, trench warfare, and long stalemates battles that characterized" WWI. In addition to the use of the commemorative motive, there we see a second motive for the rhetoric of numbers during wartime: the control of populations and public opinion. WWI would begin the process of isolating citizens through the use of numbers and the increased reliance on experts. The motive of control, so clearly displayed in the great propaganda campaigns of WWI, prompted democratic theorists to debate the capacities of average citizens to engage in an informed policy discussion. In the post-WWI era, Walter Lippmann’s valorization of elite democracy won out. And thus one long-lasting consequence of the state’s motive of control in the post-WWI period was a general move away from the civic deliberation championed during the Progressive Era and toward a more restrained technical sphere where technocratic elites would use their “expertise” to make decisions for the people and in their name. This chapter explored the Lippmann-Dewey debate over the ability of the public to actively participate in the democratic process.
The Vietnam War and Cold War serve as the next historical case study, in which Robert McNamara is a primary focus. This section will engage Max Weber’s theories of rationalization to better understand the potential dehumanizing elements of an overtly quantitative approach to war. The examination of the Vietnam centers on Robert McNamara’s time as Secretary of Defense and how McNamara changed the landscape of defense and fighting of wars. McNamara’s biggest efforts included the introduction of the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting to the Department of Defense, which redefined normative processes of defense planning where military experience (which McNamara lacked) was discredited while quantitative rationality (which McNamara possessed in spades) was elevated to the “level of status of authority and legitimacy.”

The transformation of war to a super-rationalized process that promoted the selection of weapons to a cost-benefit analysis at the expense of context and intelligence represented a shift in the way war was conceived and carried out. McNamara created a whole elaborate system of accounting - inputs and outputs - that mainly worked to optimize the money spent per dead VC. This calculation was communicated to the US public through daily body count briefings. It is important to look at the gaps created by the numerical representation. If left unchallenged, a numerical or accounting representation can change the way we view the world, and create new norms for social behavior. Social theorists including Noam Chomsky, Stuart Hall, and Bruno Latour have discussed that once particular representations become dominant and the issues are debated within acceptable terms, the “underlying assumptions become instilled as sacred truths rather than human constructs.” In this light, the chapter argues that the power of the control motive lies in the ability to limit public participation in important decisions about war. In the latter half of the 20th century, it occurred through investment in experts and their use of numbers beyond the conceptual grasp of average citizens, and even the government, and it reveals a motive of control that emerges from biopolitical thinking.
Chapter 3: Commemoration and Control in the War on Terror: The Bush and Obama Administration’s Use of Numbers

Chapter Three of this dissertation will analyze how the Bush and Obama administrations use of numerical rhetorics in the War on Terror. This chapter takes up Engels and Saas’ call for rhetorical critics to “describe and ultimately demystify the discourses justifying war,” and it aims to show how both the Bush and Obama administrations’ lack of numerical rhetorics facilitated the support of the war, and masked the true costs that will be felt by generations to come. My analysis builds on the extensive body of work that has examined the War on Terror in its various forms, but focuses our attention on the use of numerical rhetorics. To do so, I focus first on President Bush’s use of numbers during the 2002 State of the Union Address, illuminating the mundane and vague use of numbers used to argue for a broader war. In his major speeches in the months following the September 11, 2001, President Bush rhetorically constructed the “war on terror” and its ambiguous national enemy. The president’s reliance on commemorative rhetoric, frequently tying actions back to the attacks on September 11th, promoted an ideal frame through which American citizens were to see the event and the responses that followed. This reliance on epideictic displaced more deliberative arguments that could be questioned, debated, and countered with another plan of action. While President Bush began the push a global War on Terror within the commemorative motive, he and his administration gravitated toward the control motive as the push for the Iraq War began in earnest. In the end, this section shows that it is increasingly difficult to separate the two motives, as they have the ability to reinforce each other if deployed effectively.

The categorization of motives for numerical rhetorics, such as control and commemoration, begins to define the fields and give us insight to reasons why certain numbers were used, but they do not provide the criteria for judgment. To answer the question of what available means of judgment do citizens have when it comes to evaluating the use of numbers, I
offer an apparatus for how the public can judge the use of numerical rhetorics that focuses on three criteria: accuracy, transparency, and magnitude. These three criteria may also be thought of as parts of another three-step hierarchy: product, process, and politics. Accuracy can be likened to product when we think of accuracy of the number-as-thing. Transparency can be likened to process, as we are concerned with the method and publicity of the thing-making process. Finally, magnitude can be likened to politics, as we are indicating the importance of selection and emphasis, or the choice of that which compels attention or action.

Finally, I examine President Obama’s use of numbers in the War on Terror, which largely transitions from a motive of commemoration to a motive of control. I argue that the expansion of the drone program, and criticism of it, required a different rhetorical response from that of President Bush. The Obama administration’s particular use of numbers narrowed the realm of public deliberation and it attempted set the state up as the sole arbiter of accurate numbers used during war. As President Obama readied his former counterterrorism advisor, John Brennan, to head the CIA, the Obama administration moved to justify their targeted use of drone strikes, particularly on American citizens. The acknowledgment of the four Americans killed reasserts the state's stake in controlling numbers by declaring a specific number that exceeds press publications of Americans killed by drones. Revealing the fourth name, the previous unidentified Jude Kenan Mohammad, asserted the control and apparent disclosure on the part of the government. It began to push the burden of proof back to the critics, knowing that with a passive, cynical and acquiescent public, the state can rest easy.

Chapter 4: Anti-War Numbers and the Deliberative Motive

Chapter Four will look at the numbers used by anti-war voices as they push against administrative representations and discourses. While some anti-war groups are disruptive and
promote violence, others proceed with a more deliberative tact. The most prominent locations that features anti-war numbers are websites and groups that count deaths in the wars. Their use of numbers exhibits what I call a deliberative motive. A part of this motive is the belief that the public is capable of understanding complex information and contributing to decisions to go to war. Echoing the democratic theory of John Dewey, the deliberative motive promotes the idea that a democratic community cannot be handed down by a democratic elite, but instead is reliant on the active participation of citizens. The deliberative motive exemplifies how anti-war groups are able to harness statistics, traditionally a technology of governance used by the state since the 18th century, to challenge the state’s claims and their formulation of knowledge/power. This chapter examines how the anti-war groups’ numbers use the criteria for judgment discussed in chapter 3: accuracy, transparency, and magnitude.

The first anti-war case study is Human Rights Watch (HRW), a non-profit organization that investigates potential violations of international humanitarian law by parties in a conflict. Human Rights Watch promotes the quality of the research that includes on-the-ground monitoring, as well as statistical research, bomb data analysis, and use of satellite photography to document civilian casualties. HRW group surveyed the use of cluster munitions throughout the first years of the Iraq War. The work of HRW engages the deliberative motive through its access into the effects of war and the exposure of how innocent people suffer through the conflict. The second case study is that of two reports on Iraqi deaths in the first years of the war that was conducted by Johns Hopkins professor Les Roberts and his team. The reports garnered some attention, mostly due the awe-inspiring estimates they provided. In the 2004 study Roberts and his team of Iraqi researchers estimated that around 100,000 Iraqis had died during the time period from March 2003 to September 2004. The estimate of 100,000 Iraqis dead since the beginning of the war was an astonishingly high number, close to ten times higher than any other estimate at the time. Roberts et al. updated their study in 2006, responding in part to criticism of the wide
confidence interval, or range of potential deaths. Confident in their methodology, they focused on the transparency criteria to achieve a more accurate, and even more astounding, estimate of 600,000 deaths during the first three years of war in Iraq. This case study shows how the deliberative motive can foster this moral debate by producing estimates of civilian casualties to the forefront, as citizens had to engage the possibility that such a large number of Iraqis had been killed in a war that was fought nominally for their freedom from tyranny.

The third anti-war case study looks at the websites of Iraq Body Count (IBC) and their effort to bring to light the numbers obscured by the administration, particularly the civilian deaths caused during the United States invasion and occupation of Iraq. IBC differentiated themselves from Roberts et al. by focusing on their methodology, which they argued produced more accurate results. To compile their statistics, IBC crosschecks media reports of civilian casualties or bodies found with a “careful review and integration of hospital, morgue, NGO and official figures.” For the IBC, the civilian casualties are more than a number used for aggregation. As a part of their methodology, IBC includes details of the deaths, including the number of people killed, where it happened, and when. The final case study is of the Bureau for Investigative Journalism, a group that dedicated themselves in part to drawing attention the deaths caused in the covert drone war. By challenging the state’s claims that no civilians had been killed by drone strikes in 2011, groups like the Bureau for Investigative Journalism also challenge the state’s role in formulating knowledge/power. The de-centering of the location of the knowledge/power when it comes to civilian casualties begins to shift the ability that the state has to control information, particularly when it comes to victims of war.

Taken together, the case studies in the above chapters will illuminate how numbers are used in war discourse for a variety of different purposes and policies. Looking at the locations numbers are used, and paying particular attention to whom is using them, this dissertation
provides an understanding of the power numbers have in the rhetoric of war. This dissertation offers a rhetorical account of how numbers are used in war, and an assessment of the democratic potential for a citizenry to be successfully engaged in political discourse that is awash with numbers. The literature of war rhetoric has until now overlooked the impact of how numbers are marshaled in arguments for and against war. By focusing on the rhetorical nature of counting that is used in the promotion of and justification for wars, I hope to add to this discipline an understanding of how numbers are rhetorical, how numbers play a foundational role in how we learn about and remember wars, and how they form a baseline for judging the success of our missions. My goal is to expand our understanding of how numbers help frame our debate about war, constrain and promote particular policies, and potentially motivate the American people to support or oppose war. As we live amidst the unending War on Terror that is constantly flooding us with numbers, it is more important than ever that we understand the ways in which we see numbers not as absolute facts, but as rhetorical constructions. In the end, this dissertation offers a survey of political tools that will better enable citizens to critically engage the political numbers they encounter every day.


2 James Dawes writes, “If naming is the projection of identity, then counting is the abstraction out of identity.” James Dawes, The Language of War: Literature and Culture in the U.S. from the Civil War Through World War II (Harvard University Press, 2005), 31.

3 Richard Whately. Elements of Rhetoric: Comprising an Analysis of the Laws of Moral Evidence and of Persuasion, with Rules for Argumentative Composition and Elocution. Eds. Douglas Ehninger and David Potter. (Carbondale: SIU Press, 2010), p. 4. In the introduction, Ehninger notes that Whately objects to the Aristotelian conception of rhetoric as contingent, and denies rhetoric the space to aid those looking to reach collective choices or decisions. Instead is crafted as “the” art of persuasion, a move that Ehninger
writes allows the Christian advocate, “starting out from revealed premises,” to “arrive at irrefutable truths” (xi).


5 Whateley, Elements of Rhetoric, xiv.

6 Whateley, Elements of Rhetoric, footnote on 40.


9 Nikolas Rose. “Governing by numbers: Figuring out democracy.” Accounting, Organizations and Society, 16 (7), 673.


11 Hacking, The Taming of Chance, 5.

12 Hacking, The Taming of Chance, 2.

13 The use of numbers in public discourse requires scrutiny, but governments have historically, and to some degree currently, been the largest collectors and producer of numbers. The history of the rise of numbers is addressed later in the dissertation.


37 Hartnett and Stengrim, 2.


40 Stephen John Hartnett and Jennifer Rose Mercieca, “‘A Discovered Dissembler Can Achieve Nothing Great’; Or, Four Theses on the Death of Presidential Rhetoric in an Age of Empire,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (December 1, 2007), 600.


49 Benoit, 70. Benoit’s definition derives from C. Wright Mills’ “Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive.” In this piece, Mills writes that motives are words and he believes that “they do not denote any elements ‘in’ individuals.” C. Wright Mills, “Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive,” *American Sociological Review* 5 (1940), 904.


51 Michele Chwastiak, “Taming the untamable: planning, programming and budgeting and then normalization of war,” *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 26, no. 6 (2001), 501.

52 Michele Chwastiak, “Taming the untamable,” *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 26, no. 6 (2001), 502.


Chapter 1

Numbers and the Civil War: Biopolitics and the Commemorative Motive

Wars have played an integral role in the history of civilization, moving people at times closer to democracy, while at others assuring the continuance of dictatorial rule. Buried within this history of wars is a history of numbers. The middle of the 19th century saw the rise of biopolitics throughout Western countries, as nation-states solidified and took stock of their resources. The United States was no different, and in the U.S. there was a crucial relationship between biopolitics and war—beginning, especially, with the Civil War. While neither side was prepared for a protracted conflict, as the war lingered and intensified the Union and Confederacy quickly discovered the tolls that a lengthy military campaign would have on their soldiers and citizens. Here, the use of numbers in war rhetoric had largely to do with the motive of commemoration, especially in the creation of the National Cemetery System and the demand to count and identify fallen soldiers.

The rise of numbers in war rhetoric is intimately tied to the rise of biopolitics in the U.S. The concept of biopolitics, developed by Michel Foucault, is concerned with relationship between life (bios in Greek) and politics. As Foucault describes it, biopolitics is concerned not with the individual level characteristics of human beings, but biological features measured and aggregated to the level of populations. In Society Must Be Defended, Foucault mentions that included in these aggregated measurements are the "ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population, and so on."¹ The notion of biopolitics thus refers to the growth of specialized knowledge that is found in new disciplines such as statistics, demography, epidemiology, and biology. The specific knowledge gathered in these fields maintains a political edge as it is used in the governing of human beings. Analyzing the particular fields of knowledge and their productive effects through the concept of biopolitics allows one to view how a state uses this knowledge to
govern individuals and collectives by “practices of correction, exclusion, normalization, disciplining, therapeutics, and optimization.” For Foucault, knowledge and power are produced simultaneously, occurring in a circular process. There is no discernible causal relationship between knowledge and power, Foucault writes, thus “we should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands and its interests…. We should admit rather that power produces knowledge that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.” The focus for the critic is on the relationship between the knowledge and power, with an eye toward how they are used to for social control.

The social control elements of biopolitics focus on the preservation of human life. Foucault notes that in the second half of the 18th century, the state began to focus on measurable processes (e.g., the birth rate, the mortality rate, longevity, etc.) that it sought to control. States took an active role in teaching medicine and hygiene to improve the lifespan of its citizens, which it viewed as vital to a healthy and prosperous economy. Foucault writes that the state’s relationship has changed, from the power of the sovereign with the right “to take life or let live,” to a modern concept of biopower that holds as a goal the right to foster life or disallow it to the point of death. This chapter is concerned with how the state negotiates its relationship to death on a larger scale, and the ways in which the state uses the growing pile of numbers in the formation of knowledge and how it manifests it through an exercise of power. I see the growth of biopolitics as the driving factor behind the commemorative motive for the use of numbers in American war rhetoric.

Beginning in the Civil War, with the rise of biopolitics, the amount of, and interest in, numbers increased in government discourse. The creation of the National Cemetery System and the growing interest in counting and naming soldiers exemplified the government’s growing stake
in biopolitical power. The National Cemetery System and the rhetoric surrounding it offer a glimpse into the motives of commemoration and how it functions to facilitate the state control over the lives and deaths of citizens.

This chapter on numbers during the Civil War is comprised of four parts. First, I focus on the changing patterns of memorialization during the middle nineteenth century, situating American culture praxis within a broad cultural revival of interest in ancient Greek culture. Second, I discuss how fallen soldiers, and the realities of conscription, drove a rise in numbers during the war. Next, I examine on the biopolitical demands of a total war, including the need to count the dead. Finally, I describe how the Civil War re-articulated the Revolutionary-era “contract of blood” rhetoric with a similar focus on disciplining citizens and offering a model for them to follow. I will show the commemorative motive of numerical rhetorics in war, as the government sought to use the growing numbers of dead soldiers to their own end. Epideictic rhetoric and memorialization played equal roles in how the state attempted to harness the dead to model a new form of citizenship where one is expected to give their whole life for the perpetuation of the nation.

**Dealing with the Growing Dead: The Link Between Numbers and Remembering**

For more than a century, it has been accepted that more than 620,000 soldiers died in the war, with nearly half of those dying off the battlefield “from disease and festering wounds.” J. David Hacker challenged this long-standing total with a comprehensive study of 1850-1880 censuses and census-based mortality estimation and found it to be 20 percent low. Hacker places the total death toll closer to 750,000. The scale of such large numbers evades an easy comparison in the 21st century, but a few basic statistics on the militaries from the 1860s may help. At the outbreak of the war, the U.S. Army numbered 16,367 regulars. By the end of the war, the Union
army would stand at over 1 million strong, with total enlistments during the war numbering 2,128,948. On the Confederate side, the armies were initially strictly state militia, though by the time Lee surrendered at Appomattox more than 1,082,119 would pass through his command.\(^7\) One of the clearest ways to understand the impact is through a simple set of ratios. About 1 out of every 10 able-bodied Northern adult males was killed or injured in the war, and this ratio increases to 1 of 4 for the South.\(^8\) Two and a half percent of the nation’s population would perish during the war, an equivalent of over seven million Americans in 2012.\(^9\) In actual deaths, only World War II claimed more lives, but the Civil War’s massive death tolls would transform the way we understand how numbers operate in war and in public memory.

The shock and horror of massive death tolls took some time to build in the national consciousness, as three months into the Civil War a combined 20 soldiers had died. The first major battle, one which brought the reality of this industrialized war to the forefront of the Northern mindset, occurred on July 21, 1861 just 30 miles from Washington, D.C. The Battle of Bull Run (or Manassas as the Confederates knew it) featured two armies totaling over 60,000 men. After twelve hours of battle, the result was a “shocking and ignominious Union defeat and bloody rout.”\(^10\) More alarming for both sides was learning of the nearly 900 deaths and 2,700 wounded in this single battle, which was nearly half the total of the entire Mexican War.\(^11\) By the spring of 1862, Drew Gilpin Faust notes that Americans recognized that they had “embarked on a new kind of war,” as the Battle of Shiloh yielded close to 24,000 casualties, including approximately 1,700 dead on each side.\(^12\) The scale of casualties exceeded all prior wars in part due to the advance in technology, including the invention of a rifle with four times the range of the smoothbore musket.\(^13\) The casualties would only grow over the course of the war as the smoothbores were replaced with repeating guns like Spencer carbine and the Henry and Winchester rifles.\(^14\) As the nation bared witness to the increasing death tolls it sought a way to commemorate their losses, but also accounting for their sacrifice.
A nation’s desire to honor the sacrifice of its fallen soldiers dates back to ancient history. As described by Herodotus, Athenian heroes were buried in the field of battle where they fell. They were honored with a public funeral lasting a few days, all of which was concluded with a public speech by a prominent Athenian. Pericles delivered the most famous oration, which was recorded by Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*. An often taken-for-granted element of this memorialization is the naming of the dead soldiers. Garry Wills describes the revival of Greek oratory during the mid-19th century in his book, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*. Edward Everett’s speech that preceded Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address made explicit references to Pericles’ oration, and that Lincoln’s reference to government *by the people* resonated with a renewed belief in direct democracy over the republican virtues associated with Roman tradition (and the country’s Founding Fathers). The interest in Greek memorialization and oratory during the 1860s encourages us to see American commemorative practices in light of classical norms, for this is how Americans, both North and South, saw their civic practices.

We learn about the past through histories, and for much of the Western world, the origins of political life reside in Ancient Greece. It should be no surprise, then that the first histories of Ancient Greece were histories of War. Herodotus reports at length the Persian attacks on Greece (499-448 BCE), and he includes a narrative not only of battle (for which he is most remembered), but also of causes of the war. Thucydides relayed vibrant accounts of the Peloponnesian War between Greece and Sparta (431-404 BCE). In these histories, numbers are used in strategic ways that allow for the cultivation of particular heroes, remaining a siren call to resistance fighters the world over, as well as functioning to describe the toll that war imposes on a society. Both historians also integrated numbers into their stories, setting the foundation for how numbers help us to remember wars.
In his story of the Persian Wars, *The Histories*, Herodotus sought to narrate how the Greeks came to war with the Persians, but also to remember the heroic actions of men on both sides of the battle.\(^{16}\) For these efforts, Cicero gave Herodotus the title *pater historiae*, or father of history.\(^ {17}\) His tasks included the separating of myth from fact, and Herodotus is attributed with being the first to recognize the importance of this difference.\(^ {18}\) Embedded in *The Histories*, which it is reported to have moved Thucydides to tears, is an important role that numbers played in the retelling and remembering of the great Persian Wars. Of particular import to Herodotus was creating a nearly physical link between his readers and the soldiers he was memorializing.

Herodotus’s narrative, and its use of wise advisors, illuminates the way in which numbers can be used to highlight the resolve of the Greeks. The battle at Thermopylae is one of the most famous battles documented in *The Histories* in which Herodotus uses numbers to create a vivid history that could be built into legend. The three day Battle of Thermopylae was fought between the invading Persian King Xerxes and his massive army totaling between 150,000 and 2,000,000 troops, and a coalition of soldiers Greek city-states totaling 7,000, which included the famous 300 Spartans, as well as.\(^ {19}\) Herodotus’s initial estimates of the Persian force, 2,641,610, have been scaled back to a more manageable, yet still impressive, 200,000.\(^ {20}\) The erroneous estimation could play into the power of numbers, increasing the lore that follows the Spartan’s last stand at Thermopylae.\(^ {21}\) The deposed Spartan king Demaratus told Xerxes that the superior number of men at his would be of no concern for the Spartans.\(^ {22}\) By numerating the troops Sparta had and the determination with which they would fight, Herodotus, and further story tellers, gave them courage, conviction, and bravery. Controlling the number meant controlling the story and telling it to their liking. Herodotus’ initial telling of the battle utilized the small number of Spartans to build a mystique around their decision to stand their ground, and the grave disadvantage faced by the Spartans in the battle to come solidified the lore of their bravery.
The third and final day of the Battle at Thermopylae featured the famous last stand by the Spartan army that would be remembered vividly due to Herodotus’s recording of the events. As the Persians prepared to attack the Greeks from the rear, effectively surrounding their location, many abandoned their location and retreated.\textsuperscript{23} Herodotus noted that he believed Leonidas, the Spartan king and commander, sent the troops home fearing that they had lost their will to fight. But, Leonidas could not retreat with honor, partially owing to the oracle’s prophecy that "that either Sparta must be overthrown by the barbarians, or one of her kings must perish."\textsuperscript{24} Leonidas, as king, must die to sacrifice himself to save Sparta. The Spartans, with the Thespians and Thebans only remaining at their side, prepared for the final battle, and certain death. Herodotus made note of particular soldiers worthy of remembrance for their fighting. Offering particular names aided in the process of remembering the dead, and gave the battle a familiar resonance. The depiction of the Greeks’ last stand, along with Herodotus’s claim that he could recite all 300 names of the Spartans (only 298 remained in Thermopylae), helped to cement the dignity of the fight. Furthermore, it promoted a certain valor in the fight, a moral victory to which many last stands throughout history would reference.\textsuperscript{25} The victors frequently write histories; we seek to remember our victories, as well as our defeats, as we want. The symbolic appeal of numbers played an important role in this rewriting of the past. For instance, in Sparta, the idea that 300 men repelled an advancing Persian army aligned with the values that the city-state of Sparta promoted. On a larger scale, many wondered how it was that the Greeks were able to thwart the invasions of Persia when they outnumbered the Greeks both in money and in men. This was, of course, a similar disadvantage the Confederacy faced in the Civil War.

The manner in which Herodotus connected the names of the Spartans killed at Thermopylae signifies an important connection that we draw between a name and a number. Marshall McLuhan discusses how a number is “an extension and separation of our most intimate and interrelating activity, our sense of touch.”\textsuperscript{26} Instead of viewing numbers as mysterious,
McLuhan believes that if numbers are viewed as an extension of our bodies, they become more intelligible. One way to make this concept intelligible is to think of the feeling engendered when a person sits in a theater, concert, or sporting event. McLuhan derives his tactile number concept from Charles Baudelaire, who spoke of “intoxication” of a number, as well as explaining the pleasure of a crowd as a “mysterious expression of delight in the multiplication of number.” The tactile function of numbers extends beyond the more common understandings of numbers as “auditory and resonant” as the aggregating of numbers statistically gives one “a new influx of primitive intuition and magically subconscious awareness.” Viewing numbers as an extension of touch, of our bodies, illuminates the reason why the accurate counting of bodies, and accounting for losses, became important for city-states and countries as wars drag on. Yet we can see from the emphasis that Herodotus places on knowing the name of each and every Spartan who died at Thermopylae that there was a sense of this tactile nature to counting. The connection made between the numbered dead and their ability to be named highlights the mediating potential of a number when it is produced in a story with a particular context, and mirrors the efforts during the Civil War to count and name all the soldiers who died. Similar to how Herodotus used numbers to create impressions, and perhaps embellished the story at Thermopylae to have an effect, Thucydides also uses numbers strategically to reveal his leanings.

The Peloponnesian War between Sparta and Athens marked the next monumental historical project that would come to shape not only the way we view good historical work, but also an historical account of the war would impact foreign policy for millennia to come. Thucydides began his work on *A History of the Peloponnesian War* as the war commenced, and finished it after being exiled by Athens. He noted in his opening lines that he began to write as the Athenians and Spartans took up arms, for, he said, it was clear that the war would be great and as memorable as any that came before it. While Cicero may have named Herodotus the father of history, Thucydides garnered an even greater following as a methodical recorder of history,
omitting the mythic elements in an attempt to achieve a history marked by “scientific precision.”

Setting himself apart from Herodotus (yet without naming him), Thucydides writes in Book I that his recording of the war would not feature any fables. Thomas Hobbes rewarded this notion when he wrote that Thucydides was to historians what Homer was to the poets, what Demosthenes was to orators, and what Aristotle was to philosophers, all deserving recognition for being the standard bearers of their respective realms. For many, Thucydides’ History stands as one of the greatest achievements in historiography, especially when one takes into consideration the limits placed on him once he was exiled. His authoritative tone and his means of not disclosing his sources lead a modern editor to say, “Thucydides has imposed his will, as no other historian has ever done.”

Even with the careful attention to detail, the way that Thucydides used numbers to retell the war has important ramifications for how numbers are currently used in remembering wars.

In Thucydides, there are four types of numbers given for casualty figures: those not qualified, those qualified by a word expression approximation, those qualified by a word expressing comparison, and a single number. Catherine Rubincam defined two major types of qualifying expressions. The first are “approximating” expressions, which “are those that indicate some unspecified degree of uncertainty and/or impression felt by the writer or speaker concerning the number mentioned.” The second type of qualifying expressions is “comparative.” Comparative expressions are those that “imply a comparison between a real figure, which is not specified, and another figure which does not claim to be exact but is said to lie at some distance above or below the real figure.”

Rubincam finds that in Thucydides’ numerical figures of troops, only 17 percent of troop numbers sent into battle are qualified compared against 57 percent of casualty figures that are qualified. This reflects less certainty on the part of either Thucydides or his informants, since Thucydides does not indicate who introduced the qualification. For Rubincam, the comparative qualifier appears to be used to “emphasize
rhetorically the largeness or smallness of the figure qualified.” This means that Thucydides or his informants could be using the numbers as means of “emphasizing the magnitude of the loss suffered” by a city or state in a battle, and thus implicitly attempting to garner more support or sympathy for one side. 38

A second area of inquiry for Thucydides’ numbers is to compare the casualty reports between the Athenians and Peloponnesians. Born around 460 BCE to a wealthy and aristocratic Athenian family, Thucydides was said to have loved his city although not always the democratic polity. 39 His high social position earned him access to important sources for his History, and it also earned him one of ten annually elected positions of general in the Athenian army. Due to his incompetent military performance, he was voted into exile, likely spending most of his remaining years travelling and collecting information for his History. 40 Despite being exiled in 424 BCE, or midway through his History, Rubincam finds that Thucydides continues to provide more accurate casualty figures for the Athenian side. Nearly twice as many casualty figures are given for the Athens and her allies as for the Peloponnesian states. He qualified 70 percent of the Peloponnesian figures, while only qualifying about 50% of the Athenian figures. 41 Rubincam notes that the use of greater qualifiers and thus less accurate numbers for the Peloponnesian side “seems likely to reflect something of his own interests or sympathies.” 42 Even in the instance of loses for Athens Thucydides gives greater weight to the figures of his homeland, sometimes not mentioning the opposing casualty figures at all. 43 Rubincam suggests that this reflects Thucydides’ perception of “the relatively greater importance of the Athenian losses” rather than a simple lack of information regarding the enemy’s losses. 44 The inclusion or exclusion of certain casualty reports reflects a value judgment on the part of Thucydides. It was frequently of greater import for the historian to get more accurate counts for the Athenians than it was for their enemies, including when Thucydides was exiled from Athens. Even something as small as qualifying phrase impacts the way in which we think about war casualties, either pushing us to
empathize with the greater losses of one side, or attribute less attention to casualties on the other if they lack the accuracy. The careful documentation that became the most-read history of the Peloponnesian War had built-in mechanisms that placed greater import on the sacrifice of Athens and her allies, while diminishing the importance of the Peloponnesian side.45

The Greek histories of war provide an early and influential examples of how numbers shape the ways that citizens live, remember, and commemorate war. Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War* revealed the contestable nature of accurate counting, and the prioritizing of accurate counts for one’s own side. These efforts draw our attention to the use of modifiers before numbers and how they shape our assumptions of the sacrifice of our own soldiers, and even reflections on our own cultural biases. Further, a close examination of the *History* reveals the inherent bias in favoring accurate casualty counts for our own sides’ soldiers, leaving the opposing counts to remain imprecise at best, and potentially distorted at worst. Herodotus’ dutiful, and sometimes mythical, telling of the Greek battle with the Persians moved from an oral recording of the war to a written transcript. Still keeping many oral storytelling techniques at hand, Herodotus also relied heavily on anonymous sources to gather information on troop sizes casualties. *The Histories* created a physical link between the Greek readers and the soldiers who died in battle by linking the ability to accurately count them with the naming of the deceased. This is a gesture consciously and deliberately revived during the Civil War with the great efforts to assure citizens were brought closer to the battle and the sacrifice of the fallen when they were found, identified, buried and commemorated the dead accurately.
Burying the Dead and the Rise of Numbers in the Civil War

As numbers of dead soldiers increased during the Civil War, there was also a rise in the role the government played in memorializing the dead, including the creation of a National Cemetery System. The national system’s formation shows a commemoration motive on the part of the Union state, where it seeks to mold the malleable numbers of dead soldiers into a productive element to continue the fight until the end. Leading up to the Civil War, the task of burying a member of the military fell upon the quartermaster officer. There was a uniform method of the burial that included a headstone constructed of hardwood and suitably inscribed for identification. The Mexican-American War of 1846-1847 would challenge the simple process of keeping accurate records as practiced by military outposts on the frontier, and serve as a foreshadowing of the difficulty that would be faced during the Civil War. During the Mexican-American War, the process of “recovery, identification, and burial of soldiers in large-scale battles” proved that the policies and processes for counting and burying the war dead would not be sufficient for industrialized wars. Even with a standardized policy in place during the Mexican War, the United States military failed to keep accurate records of battlefield graves, thus impinging on the official memorialization after the battles. Two years after the war ended, the U.S. government found and reinterred 750 soldiers in an American cemetery in Mexico City. This represented only five percent of the dead in this war, yet not one soldier was identified in death. Fifty years after the battle, the Mexican government proposed a monument to the memory of the soldiers of both nations who were killed in the battle of Buena Vista, but the War Departments could find no location of the burial site. The nation thus failed in its moral obligation to provide for the accurate recording of their fallen soldiers, a process that would drive the government to take great strides in alleviating during the Civil War.
The responsibility to account for the dead and wounded, as well as inform the families of the loss, remains a recent change for the United States government. Faust indicates that the largest transformation during the Civil War was the establishment of a national cemetery system and officially acknowledging a “responsibility to name and honor the military dead.” The process for naming and honoring the military dead can be traced through general orders delivered by the War Department during the Civil War. The first official statement arrived two months after the first large-scale battle at Bull Run. War Department General Orders No. 75, released on September 11, 1861, “delegated to commanding officers” responsibility for the burial of officers and soldiers who died within their jurisdiction, and directed that they “properly execute the regulations and forms provided by the Quartermaster General” provided for that purpose. The length of battles, and the resulting casualties that often included the commanding officer, meant that few soldiers were capable of moving bodies and digging proper graves, because the soldiers were fatigued, hungry, and frequently injured themselves. While many now assume the process of wearing a nametag for identification is commonplace, the process of all soldiers wearing “dog tags” emerged only in the Vietnam War. The Korean War introduced American citizens to the government’s responsibility to bring back every dead soldier. During the Civil War, the responsibility fell on the commanding officers, but it was frequently aided by the soldiers themselves, many of whom made pacts with fellow soldiers that should one die in battle, the other would inform their families of their last moments. If the military could not provide the closure needed, the soldiers themselves would assure that their sacrifice was accounted for.

Acknowledging the need to remember the dead and account for their sacrifice, the federal government moved to establish a national cemetery system in 1862. As a part of an omnibus act approved by President Lincoln, Section 18 provided the president with the power “whenever in his opinion it shall be expedient, to purchase cemetery grounds and cause them to be securely enclosed, to be used as a national cemetery for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the
country.” Fourteen national cemeteries were established in 1862 after this legislation passed, including Alexandria National Cemetery, Annapolis National Cemetery, Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery, Soldier’s Home National Cemetery. 1863 saw the establishment of six more national cemeteries, the most famous of which, Gettysburg, featured a dedication address by President Lincoln. Faust notes that gathering the slain in national cemeteries “affirmed, to paraphrase Lincoln, that both they and their deaths belonged to the Union, that they had not died in vain, had—in dying that their nation might live—in some sense not died at all.” In his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln transformed the way in which citizens were to think of the dead soldiers, as well as the mission of the citizens themselves. Lincoln subordinated the living audience to the task of preserving the nation. While noting that those present can neither “add or detract” to the efforts the dead gave, for they sacrificed literally everything for the union, Lincoln dictates that the only path to listeners “to show their appreciation for the dead soldiers is dedication to the preservation of the Union.” Lincoln’s dedication at Gettysburg signaled to the American people the need to acknowledge and to honor the lives of those lost in its service, as well as a responsibility of the government to carefully note the losses.

The creation of the National Cemetery System demonstrates that burying the dead is innately related to the rise in numbers in the war. During a time when large numbers of soldiers on both sides of the war were falling, and hundreds of thousands of families were affected by the loss, the government stepped in first to commemorate the losses, but also to control the flow of numbers to aid their cause. Centralizing the process of remembrance with the creation of the National Cemetery System, the Union acknowledged the growing death tolls and moved toward commemoration, but a commemoration in service of control. Without an acknowledgement of the mass deaths by the state, there could have been thousands of different responses to the deaths. Individualized memorialization may have satisfied the needs of the families, but they would no nothing to further the cause of the war.
Biopolitics and The War for the Whole of the People

The founding of the National Cemetery System also reflects the biopolitical nature of the nation’s dedicated mission to honor and account for its fallen soldiers. This nature manifests itself through the ways the government used the bodies for their own end. One of the most present government functions driven by biopolitics was the counting of the population. As the concept of the nation-state grew and countries engaged in war with neighbors, a tally of the country’s resources helped dictate the length of battles and the willingness to even engage in the first place. Foucault notes that the growth of biopolitics occurred at a time when an “explosion of numerous and diverse techniques” allowed for the subjugation of bodies and control of the population. The growth of numbers and the impetus to count took hold in Western Europe in the 17th century, but the greatest growth in state-based statistics occurred during the Industrial Revolution. Historian Patricia Cline Cohen writes that by the mid-19th century, Americans had developed an "infatuation with numbers." In the 1820s and 1830s, numerous governmental and private actors were "eagerly counting, measuring, and churning out data," a process that Cohen ties to the rise of numeracy in America (e.g., beginning to require arithmetic in schools, including Harvard in 1802), as well as the spread of the "domain of numbers" that began to describe things we once thought of only in qualitative terms became subject to quantification (e.g., human life via statistics of birth, death, disease). Part of the infatuation stems from how counting demands a uniformity of measurement, and measurement often leads to efficiency. Efficient counting of the Civil War dead never emerged, but the impetus to count also struck many citizens for more republican ends. The uniformity of measurement created an equal basis for a life's worth. Captains were included in death tolls with members of the cavalry; the death of a West Point graduate was tallied with equal weight to the death of a draftee from Maine. The nation now torn apart by a civil war would have to use every technique at its disposal in order to count the
hundreds of thousands who gave their lives for their respective sides. Though the impetus to count and remember existed on both sides the North was able to marshal greater resources to their cause.

Both the Union and Confederate governments felt the strain of the war on their populations, and this pressure only increased after the conclusion of the first year of fighting. As both sides anticipated a short battle until the other side would concede, the one-year mark changed how the governments would monitor bodies and call for their use. In the Confederacy, soldiers were initially enlisted for a year, but with no end to the conflict in view, there was a need to increase the size of their militias, which stood over 200,000. In writing to the governor of Virginia in December 1861, Robert E. Lee suggested the solution resided in a draft if the men did not volunteer. Though the concept violated the Confederacy’s touchstone of state’s rights, a national conscripted army appeared to be the only solution to the impending enlistment crisis. After the failure of the Furlough and Bounty Act, which promised men fifty-dollar bonus and two-month furlough if they re-enlisted for three years or the duration of the war, the Confederacy relinquished their ideals in an effort to prolong the fight by passing the first conscription act in American history. With conscription now solidified, beginning in the South, both governments became more engaged in a politics that could promote and protect one’s life, even at the cost of another life.

The increased use of numbers by both governments during the Civil War were used for the accurate counting and memorization of fallen soldiers, as well as the growth of conscripted service. The numbers they collected and publicized do not merely inscribe a pre-existing reality, but they constituted it. Nikolas Rose writes that the inscription and accumulation of facts about the national population “render visible a domain with a certain internal homogeneity and external boundaries.” The collection and dissemination of these numbers participates in a “fabrication of a ‘clearing’ within which thought and action and occur.” Both the Union and the Confederacy
showed their desire in collecting numbers, whether it was through a census or potential soldiers. With numbers in hand and publicized through newspapers, the state could now push for its own survival, and that of the population, through the end of the war. The motivation of control is exemplified in the state’s expanded role in the counting of conscripted soldiers. The production of these numbers creates fictive spaces in which the government can operate, giving it the power to operate and dominate such spaces.

In the aftermath of the Civil War's destruction, the American public required these numbers of their wounded and dead soldiers as a reminder of the cause their respective sides took up. Each side desired to remember their fallen accurately, and in the case of the South, there was a desire to recognize the valor of the immense toll the war took on their young men. The growth of the conscripted service also marshaled in another element of government growth that required an accurate counting of the dead: national cemeteries and reburial.

The awesome scale of death and destruction brought forth by the Civil War affected the nation on a personal, structural, and even ideological level. Faust notes that the changing policies after the war indicate the "assumption of new responsibilities by the federal government," both for the dead soldiers, but also to their "families and to the women so often left alone to head them as the result of war’s carnage." These new responsibilities toward the dead and the families also reflect a change in the relationship between citizenship and death. As over 750,000 soldiers died in the battle, over half of them remained unidentified at the war's end. In order to fully honor the dead, but also in order to use their deaths toward the continuation of the state, the government recognized the need to identify their dead.

Clara Barton emerged as an individual committed to identifying the unnamed soldiers and reinterring them in proper recognition of their service. As a nurse during the war, Barton took notes on the families so she could forward the survivor’s information of their loved one's last moments. Motivated by a continual flood of letters from women in search of any information
regarding their husbands, Barton founded an organization called the Office of Correspondence with the Friends of the Missing Men of the United States Army in 1865. Her goal for the organization was to serve as a clearinghouse that would publish names submitted to it in search of any information regarding their fate. By the time she closed the office in 1868, Barton had received and answered 63,182 letters and identified 22,000 soldiers.64 The state fell behind the citizenry in the ability to count and name all of the fallen soldiers, but in an attempt to control their usage, the government attempted to enlist the help of Barton. In the summer of 1865, Secretary of War Edward Stanton sent Barton down to Andersonville Prison with quartermaster James Moore, who had implemented the new graves registration procedures in 1864 and who was now in charge of battlefield cemeteries. Faust notes that their efforts resulted in the "identification of 12,912 of the 13,363 recovered bodies," and all were reinterred in marked graves in the newly dedicated Andersonville National Cemetery.65 Barton's persistence in accounting for the sacrifice of soldiers and the impact the uncertainty of their family member's fate had on families back home showed her recognition of a connection between citizenship and service. “The true patriot,” she declared,

willingly loses his life for his country—these poor men have lost not only their lives, but the very record of their death. Common humanity would plead that an effort be made to restore their identity. . . . As call after call for ‘three hun-dred thousand more’ fell upon the stricken homes, the wife released her hus-band and the mother sent forth her son, and they were nobly given to their country for its necessities: it might take and use them as the bonded officer uses the property given into his hands; it might if needs be use up or lose them, and they would submit without complaint, but never . . . has wife or mother agreed that for the destruction of her treasures no account should be rendered her. I hold these men in the light of Government property unaccounted for."66
This complex view of citizenship, Faust indicates, is part of the mutual obligations that bind citizens and the state together. When the government uses a soldier to secure the longevity of the nation, there is an obligation on the part of the state to make sure the soldier was properly accounted for in death.

Barton’s quote on citizenship speaks to the potential success of the government’s motivation to control the deployment of numbers, particularly through the process of commemoration. By admitting that it had a role in the burial of soldiers killed at their asking, the state realized in one fashion that it was indebted to those citizens and families in whose service the thousands of men died. The new situation created by the burial of the dead on such a large scale, as well as the visibility of the dead, facilitated a new innovation on the part of the state. In order to control the reaction to the deaths, the state was motivated to initially capture the number of those killed in battle, and later pushed to name all those who died in service of the state. With a motivation toward commemoration, the Union attempted not only to preserve the integrity of the state, but also change the ways in which its citizens viewed the continuing battle, and their obligations to the fight.

Foucault writes that since the 19th century, no longer are wars waged in the name of the sovereign who must be defended, but they are instead waged “on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized of the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity.” Prior to the 19th century and developments in technology, in the name of war, sovereigns did not visit such “holocausts on their own populations,” and thus did not have experience the push to promote life balanced with the real opportunity to take away life en masse. Yet, amidst the drive of power, manifest for Foucault in the promotion of life on the level of the population, remains the latent responsibility or power to exercise death in a meaningful way. Examining the massive death tolls of the Civil War illuminates the claim that these near massacres are now predicated on the survival of everyone or, specifically for Lincoln
and the North, on the preservation of the Union. Lincoln’s principled fight to preserve the Union led to the discussion of how a nation that fights for citizenship, freedom and human dignity then requires the government to “attend to the needs of those who died in its service.” In order to properly transfer the onus of duty onto the living, the government would first need to count the fallen soldiers. Due to the massive scale of death and misery that the war produced, bodies became an important way the measure of the war. The bodies served to measure the achievements and the impact of the war, and did so due to their highly visible nature. The most famous photographer of the Civil War, Mathew Brady, brought the war to the populace of New York City in exhibitions at his studio on Broadway. The New York Times noted that if Brady “has not brought bodies and laid them in our doorways and along the streets, he has done something very like it.” Brady’s images did not have large circulation at the time, as newspapers were unable to print photographs. The images people saw in publications like Harper’s Weekly were engravings derived from the photographs. Yet any reminder through the photographs brought the war home, and reinforced the impact that it had on the entire country.

Citizenship and The Re-articulation of the Contract of Blood

The state’s work of counting the dead built on the self-remembrance work completed by the soldiers, but it also showed that there was the work yet to be done after the war. On the hand, there was the process of naming and burying the dead in national cemeteries. Later, the formation of a national pension system further increased the scope of the federal bureaucracy, and both efforts were predicated on the insistence to count. Mark Schantz notes the “absolute bottom line” is that for the nation, there is an insistence “that citizenship is predicated on the willingness of people to lay down their lives for the state.” Soldiers developed this idea of citizenship through service-to both God and country. The rhetoric of service “rationalized the violence of this
devastating war by casting it as the instrument of both nationalist and Christian imperatives.\textsuperscript{72}

The rhetoric of a civic debt forged by generations earlier was linked with a duty to die for the state that first emerged in the post-Revolutionary period. Describing how this “contract of blood” disciplined democracy and the citizenry in the years after the Revolutionary War, Jeremy Engels indicates that the Constitution also represented a new social contract not just with the rulers of the country, but also with America’s past.\textsuperscript{73} Americans were bound by their status as citizens to defend the nation in order to honor their mothers and fathers who died before them doing the same. The contract of blood was deployed by pro-government activists to great effect in combating the democratic uprisings of the 1790s. During the Civil War, the national imperative also became the need to properly transfer the sacrifice of the soldiers through the use of national cemeteries. In total, 303,536 Union soldiers were buried in national cemeteries.\textsuperscript{74} By focusing on the total sacrifice, represented by the headstones and statistics of those buried in the national cemeteries, there is an effort to transcend the individual sacrifice and sorrow for the family in order to wrestle with the larger loss faced by the nation and society as a whole. This effort to move from individual to national, from death to dead, emerges in Walt Whitman’s writings of the battlefields. Whitman writes in “The Million Dead, Too, Summ’d Up” of “the dead in this war,” referring to them as family to him. The effort to accept the mass carnage of the “infinite dead” in special cemeteries around the country pushed Whitman to refer to the soldiers as “the dead, the dead, the dead—our dead—or South, or North, ours all, (all, all, all, family dear to me)...”\textsuperscript{75} Faust notes that for Whitman, as others, numbers represented a means of “imposing sense and order” to the countless graves.\textsuperscript{76}

The floods of dead as the war progressed strained the resources of the state and the army to accurately count and bury their soldiers. Yet, in this battle for accurate counting, there was also the push for identification. As half of the slain were unidentified when initially buried, there was
greater emphasis placed on the count. As Faust notes, States in both North and South
“enumerated the dead to honor the slain.” For both sides:

A name upon a list was like a name upon a grave, a repository of memory, a gesture of
immortality for those who had made the supreme sacrifice. And the hundreds of
thousands of Civil War dead who remained unnamed could at least be counted. Names
might remain unknown but numbers need not be.77

As the nation increased in its numerical fascination, there was an emphasis placed on the count if
nothing more could be done. Here the accurate count does not represent an abstraction from an
identity. Instead, there is recognition of service and sacrifice that would suffice because the state
then acknowledges the totality of what they asked their young men to do.

The North emerged from the war with a bureaucracy ready to take up the critical task of
accounting for the fallen Union soldiers. The former Confederate states did not have this luxury,
and thus relied upon states and efforts from individuals to properly count and remember their
dead. Like the Union records, Confederate records were often inaccurate and frequently were
found to be hastily created. The Southern Historical Society, founded in 1869, emerged as a non-
state actor interested in an accurate count of Confederate soldiers with a mission of "vindicating
the truth of Confederate history."78 This Confederate truth would serve as a explanation and
justification for the Confederate defeat, leading to a more romantic notion, delivered through
greater proportions of Southern soldiers giving their lives, of a greater sacrifice given for their
beliefs.79

The Civil War represented one of the first modern wars in which nations had to face
large-scale sacrifice of their soldiers that occurred at a rate that exceeded their means of
accounting for causalities. The limited casualties in frontier skirmishes could be buried quickly
and appropriately, but the increased firepower, larger military formations, and faster, as well as
more frequent, troop movements impeded this process during the Civil War. The Union then
looked to centralize the accounting process, taking a larger responsibility for counting, identifying, burying, and commemorating their fallen soldiers. Increased numeration also reflected a biopolitical push on the part of the nation to use the deaths of their fallen soldiers to further the idea of the nation-state. The increased interest in biopolitical measures coincides with an increase in the commemorative motivation of numerical rhetorics from the state. In its attempt to harness the power of the population, the Union used the cemeteries and the memory of fallen soldiers to reimagine the ideal citizen. The numeration of casualties, and their specific remembrances in national cemeteries, added a numerical component to the contract of blood fashioned generations earlier following the Revolutionary War. Just as it was deployed in the post-Revolutionary period to discipline and produce orderly, patriotic citizens, the Civil War iteration of the contract of blood trope also produced a disciplinary function, though with a hint of biopolitical manipulation. The nation is only as strong as the resources that it has at its disposal, and in a modern, industrialized war, the nation begins to lose many of those resources so it must adjust its course. In the instance of the Civil War, the United States government facilitated a National Cemetery system and massive effort to identify and reinter many of their soldiers so that their deaths could be used by the nation to continue the fight.

The element of sacrificing one’s self for the nation became a part of citizenship, an element that goes back to the 1780s and 1790s. During the Civil War, there were people sacrificing themselves at once, and in an internecine conflict, and this conflict is explicitly for the future of the united nation. Additionally, there was also a responsibility placed on the state to accurately account for the sacrifices of their citizens. These lessons were tested early in the 20th century as Europe experienced what some referred to as their Civil War, increasing the death totals of the American Civil War and changing the relationship between citizens and death. The United States experienced the rise of biopolitics through the 19th Century, leading to an increased cultural awareness of numbers as well as a governmental stake in counting. During a time when
numbers and arithmetic increased in prominence, the government needed accurate counts of its resources. At war, the most important resource is manpower. Both the Union and the Confederacy took steps to accurately count and identify their dead. Lincoln's creation of the National Cemetery System, as well as massive programs of reinterment and identification, demonstrates the state's interest in counting. Further, it shows how the state used the dead to produce a new national identity, predicated on a sacrifice to the state. The memorializing and acknowledgment by the state of the sacrifice exemplify a motive of commemoration in the numerical rhetorics of counting and naming the war dead. Only through the careful counting and reburial of the mass causalities could the state attempt to harness their power in molding a mode of citizenship based around a post-Revolutionary War blood oath.

The Civil War began to connect the government role in the regime of numbers as layers of bureaucracy grew out of the desire to count and identify their soldiers. With the biopolitical emphasis placed on counting the war dead, the government also sought to shape how its citizens began to think of their connection to the dead, as well as the nation-state itself. The biopolitical push during the Civil War gave way to a regime of numbers during World War I, as the world witnessed mass murder on a grand scale. The First World War would begin the process of isolating citizens through the use of numbers and the increased reliance on experts.


Clodfelter, Warfare and Armed Conflicts, 331.


Burns, Death and the Civil War.


Faust, Republic of Suffering, 55-56. When casualties of war are listed, this includes both the dead and the wounded. Though the terms are used interchangeably at times in casual conversation, it is important to note the difference between the two. Further, as Faust notes in her book, many of those who died in the war did not die immediately on the battlefield, but suffered agonizing deaths due to infections and diseases that spread through camps following battles.


Clodfelter, Warfare and Armed Conflicts, 3.


Herodotus, The Histories, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1.1. In the fifth century BCE, Herodotus transformed the ways events of the past were
remembered. Long an oral culture where children learned of legends and great leaders through Homeric epics, Herodotus took to the telling of Greek history with an investigation of the past and rolls of papyrus on which to record it.


18 Jennifer Roberts, *Herodotus: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2. It is true that *The Histories* features many instances of narrative bias and even embellishment, but Herodotus’s work formulated a method of being dependent upon ones sources, while still requiring the author to make judgments upon the validity of their accounts.


21 F. Maurice, “The Size of the Army of Xerxes in the Invasion of Greece 480 B.C.,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 50 (1939), 226. However, there is also a chance that Herodotus fell victim to an error in translation, confusing the Persian terms chiliarchy and myriarchy (one thousand and ten thousand, respectively) and multiplied all figures by ten.

22 Herodotus, *The Histories*, 7.102. When Xerxes asked the deposed Spartan King Demaratus if the Greeks will resists the Persian advance, Demaratus suggested that at least the Spartans would. Demaratus continues, “or if a thousand of them should take the field, they will meet thee in battle, and so will any number, be it less than this, or be it more.”

23 While the Greeks held the Persian army in place to two days, the geographical advantage held by the Greeks was soon undermined when Ephialtes of Malis turned traitor, and showed Xerxes a secret path around Thermopylae.

Roberts, *Herodotus*, 44-48. Last-ditch efforts recall the Thermopylae motif when a small group prepares to hold off those with vastly superior numbers. Roberts cites Indian and British face-off with advancing Japanese soldiers in the Indian township of Kihima in 1944; the German soldiers sent to suffer defeat in Stalingrad, as they were ordered to fight to the death instead of retreat; the famous American defeat at the Alamo; a book documenting the unsuccessful defense of a confederate outpost in Texas in 1863 entitled *Sabine Pass: The Confederacy’s Thermopylae.*


Perez Zagorin echoes this sentiment in his 2005 Thucydides: An Introduction for the Common Reader. Zagorin writes, “Because of Thucydides’ high stature as a historian and thinker, present-day humanists and teachers of the humanities generally agree that his History is just as essential a part of a true liberal education as are Homer’s Iliad, Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex and Antigone, and some of the Dialogues of Plato and writings of Aristotle.” Perez Zagorin, Thucydides: An Introduction for the Common Reader (Princeton University Press, 2008), 3-4.


Rubincam, “Qualification of Numerals in Thucydides,” 78.

Catherine Rubincam, “Casualty Figures in the Battle Descriptions of Thucydides”, 184.

Rubincam, “Casualty Figures in the Battle Descriptions of Thucydides”, 185.


Zagorin, 9. Thucydides died a few years before the war ended with Athen’s total defeat. It would have been only after the war that Thucydides could return to Athens.


Thucydides discussed the battle near Spartolos in 2.79.2, where he documents that 430 Athenians and all three of their generals were killed. However, for their opponents, the Chalkidians and Bottiaians, he gives no figure.

Ethos becomes an important variable when looking at Thucydides’ use of numbers in the History. Given the high standing he has among modern historians, when one discovers discrepancies or figures that are hard to believe, there has been a scramble to reconcile Thucydides’ language with a different number or phrasing. Rubincam notes that in one of Thucydides’ most famous “purple passages” describing a defeated Athenian armada retreating out of the Syracusan camp and into a bloody massacre (Thuc. 7.74.2-7), Thucydides noted that “not less than forty thousand men” were in retreat. The estimation of not less than forty thousand men lost is difficult to square with Thucydides’ subsequent figure of “not less than 7,000” men were taken prisoner at the end. Rubincam finds that in order to rectify this number, some scholars have changed the phrasing on the first number, frequently by removing or altering the qualifying expression “not less than.” The power of the qualifying phrase is that it leaves open to the reader to imagine that potentially far more than 40,000 left the camp initially. By removing the phrase “not less than,” or changing it to “some,” the modern historians reduced the implied gap between the two figures mentioned: “the [not less than] 40,000 who left the camp and the [not less than] 7,000 who were taken prisoner.” Morpeth suggests that we remember that Thucydides’ work is “the result of an imperfect objectivity reached precisely because such work remains a fragile creation of an always human hand.” As imperfect as it may have been, it is important to look into the credibility given to this account, as well as the ways in which subsequent historians may alter translations or figures to better support a narrative. In the rhetorical use of numbers, there...
will always be contention, but the breaks and alterations to past numbers signified a realm in which we need to turn our attention. Catherine Rubincam, “Herodotus And His Descendants: Numbers In Ancient And Modern Narratives Of Xerxes' Campaign,” Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 104, (2008), 95. Neil Morpeth, Thucydides' War: Accounting for the Faces of Conflict (Hildesheim; New York: Olms, 2006), 55.


48 MacCloskey, Hallowed Ground, 19.


50 MacCloskey, Hallowed Ground, 21.


52 Burns, Death and the Civil War.


61 Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, 52. The democratic efforts of the Furlough and Bounty Act resulted in a bureaucratic mess, as the Confederate congress permitted soldiers to transfer from his present company to a different one. The noble effort, as Sears writes, resulted in “a tangle of bureaucratic red tape, weakened discipline, and zealous electioneering.”


68 Faust, Republic of Suffering, xiv.
Tony Patti, “Mathew Brady,” *PSA Journal* 69, no. 8 (August 2003), 25. Patti notes that the South also enlisted photographers to document the battles. Their campaign was lead by George Cook, who had been a manager at Brady’s New York studio before the war.

70 *New York Times*, October 20, 1862.

71 Mark S. Schantz, qtd in Burns, *Death and the Civil War*.


77 Drew Gilpin Faust, “‘Numbers on Top of Numbers’: Counting the Civil War Dead,” *The Journal of Military History* 70, no. 4 (October 1, 2006), 1006.

78 Faust, ‘Numbers on Top of Numbers,’ 1005.

79 Faust, ‘Numbers on Top of Numbers,’ 1005-1006. Faust lists numerous Northern individuals who also compiled statistical accounts of the war, frequently seeking to correct the errors of previous efforts (though not always successful).
Chapter 2

Numbers in the Wars of the 20th Century

“Was there a rule then that said you shouldn't bomb, shouldn't kill, shouldn't burn to death 100,000 civilians in one night?... LeMay recognized that what he was doing would be thought immoral if his side had lost. But what makes it immoral if you lose and not immoral if you win?”

-Robert McNamara

In the documentary *Fog of War*, director Errol Morris interviews Robert McNamara to better understand the motivations and psychology of the controversial Secretary of Defense, the man who helped to orchestrate the Vietnam War under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Thirty-five minutes into the documentary, the screen is filled with images of U.S. bombers dropping numbers in place of bombs. The falling numbers bring the audience closer to McNamara’s mind, which prioritizes quantitative rationality over all other political logics. McNamara was concerned with the efficiency of bombing operations, and in the film he discusses the role his calculations played in the WWII firebombing of Tokyo, which set aflame 50 square miles of the city and burned to death 100,000 civilians in one night.¹ As McNamara rose to power as Secretary of Defense, this elevation of the power of numbers in military decision-making influenced how soldiers and citizens related to numbers. Numbers began to dictate action to the degree that numerical rationalities contributed to atrocities like My Lai, all in the pursuit of a body count, a quantitative metric of success. Following the Second World War there is a change in the nature of numerical rationality, moving away from the commemoration toward that of numerical metrics. To comprehend how the power of numbers got this far, how quantitative rationality became central to the U.S. war machine, this chapter will continue the genealogy of numbers in war in the 20th century.
The rise of numbers came into stark relief as the world experienced World War I, with mass killing perpetuated on an unprecedented scale. Those both for and against the war struggled to comprehend the level of destruction. Similar to the experience of the Civil War, European governments and that of the U.S. struggled with the effort to commemorate the dead while the war continued. At the same time, another motive in addition to the commemorative began to emerge. Because of the growing rhetorical range of numerical logics available to the governments, the numerical logics could be expressed in motives of commemoration and control. The motives of commemoration and control are closely intertwined with the logics of biopolitics. For the motive of commemoration, biopolitics encourages us to think of symbolic structures and cultural patterns as a means of understanding and investigating the political processes that govern our lives. Attempts to memorialize their dead and the efforts to tie this memorialization into continuing the fight reveal how governments argue their causes are set forth for the promotion of life, even if they are capable of taking life with great efficiency. Biopolitics connects with the motive of control in the construction of hierarchies and relations of domination that citizen’s experience in their daily lives. The U.S. government created the Committee for Public Information (CPI) as a propagandistic tool to encourage support for the war, and did so by promoting certain voices and information above that of the common citizen.

Following WWI, Walter Lippmann and John Dewey debated the meaning of democracy in relationship to numbers and the role that should be played by the of individual citizen vis-à-vis the expert. The increased role that experts began to play in official discourse and policy development highlights the motive of control, as states sought to maintain the upper hand in discussions by controlling or dictating the flow of numbers and information. The import of the democratic participation continued as the power of the technical sphere grew as the U.S. entered Vietnam and the Cold War. Slowly we see a growing disenfranchisement of both citizens and soldiers as decisions are taken out of their hands, and as numbers begin to dictate action.
Numbers in the World Wars

The First World War killed people on a massive scale not yet seen in the 20th century. The chilling death tolls experienced in the United States during the Civil War only scratched the surface of sorrow wrought by the "mechanized killing, trench warfare, and long stalemated battles that characterized" World War I (WWI). Mass killing is a phrase most frequently associated with WWI. Difficult to define with precision, mass killing is approximately defined by Alan Kramer as “the killing of a large proportion of a military formation, or a large number of civilians.” Certain to qualify as mass killing, by the end of the war, 12 percent of United Kingdom soldiers, 15 percent of German soldiers, and 16 percent of French soldiers were killed. Yet Kramer notes the rate of death did not exceed the 1870-1871 Prussian War. Instead, the differentiation comes in both the length of the war and the total commitment of the countries involved. Instead of lasting 12 months, WWI lasted 54 months, and 197 German men out of every 1,000 participated in WWI (compared to 36 of every 1,000 in the Prussian War). This increasing skin in the game mirrored a heightened national devotion to battle, which is also reflected in the cultural willingness of European nations to be mobilized. Kramer notes that the belligerents of the war fought to export their culture, which allowed enemy civilians and non-combatants to be “targeted to a greater or lesser degree as targets of war policy, even as legitimate objects of violence.” The nationalistic drive motivated countries on each side of the war to unleash weapons and tactics that would take their toll, shaping ways that the countries came to view death, commemoration, and public participation in the decision to enter wars.

This section examines the rhetorical motives for using numbers that emerged during the First World War. The American state is still interested in the numbers involved in burying the dead and conscription, so though the problems with numbers are not new, the tools and rhetorics surrounding them are. The massive death tolls during WWI, and the need to govern vast armies,
drove an expansion in the state’s numerical motives to include the impact of war on non-combatants. Here, we begin to see the emergence of a second motive for the rhetoric of numbers during wartime: the control of populations and public opinion. Furthermore, the motive of control, so clearly displayed in the great propaganda campaigns of WWI, prompted democratic theorists to debate the capacities of average citizens to engage in an informed policy discussion. In the post-WWI era, Walter Lippmann’s valorization of elite democracy won out. And thus one long-lasting consequence of the state’s motive of control in the post-WWI period was a general move away from the civic deliberation championed during the Progressive Era and toward a more restrained technical sphere where technocratic elites would use their “expertise” to make decisions for the people and in their name.

Without question, commemoration remained a dominant motive for the use of numbers during WWI. The large numbers of unidentified dead also mirrored the Civil War, but these bodies were spread across Europe. Even when soldiers had the opportunity to bury their fellow countrymen in temporary graves, many would be unearthed in massive bombing campaigns that littered the countryside. In these instances, soldiers were listed a "missing." Over 700,000 soldiers were listed "missing" for the British Empire, France and the United States. The scale of such destruction, and the uncertainty that emerges from unknown or unidentified dead, led countries along the Western Front to commemorate their loss along with those who could be identified. This change in scale forced the state and citizens to produce new rhetorics to try and comprehend the devastation. The practices that began in the second half of the 19th century were solidified after WWI and shaped the ways that countries and their citizens find, count, bury and commemorate their dead.

The destruction wrought by war between 1914-1918 changed the way in which Western cultures negotiated the work of death and how it is valorized. New rhetorics emerged regarding victimhood, particularly as it dealt with the death of citizens or non-combatants in the war. Prior
to the industrialized slaughter of 9 million men and women in Europe during WWI, particularly when the nation-state began to assert itself, there was an association between the individual and collective efforts of a shared destiny that one may have laid down their lives so that the nation might continue to exist. On the one hand, there was a push away from the heroic soldier dying in battle toward a view in which one became a victim of the war. Capdevila and Voldman write that during WWI no longer were soldiers “recognized or commemorated as war heroes but as victims,” causing a perspective shift from one of “hero-worship to an acknowledgment of their status as victims,” even including those who were victorious in battle. The large scale of the battles, and the ensuing death tolls affected how many in Europe viewed the war dead. The inclusion of civilians in the memorializing of the nation, seen particularly in France, is a key feature of the new rhetoric that viewed war dead as victims instead of heroes, as the length of battles engulfed areas with denser populations. After the first year of battle, France passed a new law on July 2, 1915 that stipulated death certificates to bare the statement “Died for France” for soldiers, but also non-combatants with military status such as “doctors, ministers of religion, medical orderlies, and female nurses in military hospitals,” and even anyone who contracted an illness while caring for the sick and wounded in the army; any civilian killed by the enemy, either as a hostage or in public office. Facilitated by the broad reach of the war, the increased likelihood of civilian casualties, and the recognition of a family’s suffering in the aftermath of a military loss, the shift away from heroic death preceded a recognition battles serving as a prelude to further battles where the level of violence and cruelty would increase. The new discourses of victimhood of WWI held a view that nobody would emerge unscathed from the “war to end all wars.” Not now, and not in future wars.

The effects of battle images, first seen around the Civil War, continued to impact the ways citizens viewed war and the rising casualty counts. Capdevila and Voldman claim that WWI marked a turning point in how European society viewed the bodies in three ways. First, on both
sides of the conflict, war photographers and filmmakers were prolific in their depictions of the fighting. The proliferation of visual images representing death in its “stark, and therefore unbearable, reality came to fore, displacing images of heroism.”[10] The vivid and depressing images soon gave rise to censorship of the images, which has continued in the West through the events of September 11, 2001. A second impact of the images was their function of denouncing war. The brutal images of massive numbers of exposed corpses facilitated a move where in democracies “violence suffered was presented in an accusatory way against the enemy, or to denounce war.”[11] The showing of the mass killing in newspapers and magazines and the focus on the victim continued throughout the twentieth century, angling away from Western victims and moved toward the representation of “populations of exotic people regularly brutalizes by and enemy with blurred faces.”[12] The third change Capdevila and Voldman discuss is the turn away from the presence of death in the world of the living. They say “putting bodies on display had become indecent in an era of changed sensibilities.”[13] The co-existence of the dead with the living in the trenches on the Western Front and gradual cultural shifts during the Second World War lead to “a rapprochement at the cultural level between those who were still alive and the bodies of those who had died.”[14] The move away from heroic images to those of victims, the use of images to argue against the war or imbue the enemy for the atrocities, and the gradual removal of the bodies from the public eye all grew from the presence the numerous corpses created by the automated war, and the impacts affected the way the wars would be memorialized. The motives of commemoration for the state changed in part due to the large death tolls, as well as their occurrence in foreign countries.

The scale of destruction in WWI set a precedent for memorials and efforts of public memory for wars to follow. Carole Blair, V. William Balthrop, and Neil Michel identify three foundational practices first seen in WWI that would be repeated throughout the century. The first was the "ubiquitous effort to remember the missing, those whose bodies were never found after
the war and thus were unavailable for burial."^15 In Britain, France and Belgium, names of the missing have been engraved in walls to commemorate those whose bodies could not be recovered. The United States followed similar practices, placing missing soldier's names inside military chapels. A second practice for some nation-states following WWI was to build utilitarian or "living" memorials designed to aide those who survived the war. Sometimes these memorials would take the form of scholarships or endowments, but many frequently took the form of bridges, parks, hospitals, or schools.\(^16\) The Tombs of the Unknown constituted the third influential memorial practice following the war. This was a national practice, focusing on the production of a national hero. The first national memorials for the unknown soldiers were constructed in England and France in 1920; Italy, Portugal, and the United States followed suit in 1921, and Belgium built their memorial in 1922.\(^17\) The international phenomenon continued through the start of the 21st century, with New Zealand constructing their national memorial for WWI unknown dead in 2004. The tombs of the unknown served as a “relational enthymeme,” where those buried inside could be your husband, brother, son, etc. The families that accepted their loss, even without a body, would then find solace in the memorialization of their fallen loved one, even if they had to remain unidentified. Without a name, they could still be counted and thus have their sacrifice recognized. Many throughout Europe and the United States undertook judicious work to limit the number of unknown soldiers in the wars after 1918. A process of “identity discs” that began intermittently during the Civil War featured a soldier’s name, company, regiment, division, corps, and perhaps hometown. Sadly, the practice was not systemic, leading to half of the graves during the Civil War to initially bear the status “unknown.” Even as the practice of wearing these discs began to be regulated by the start of the WWI, many soldiers did not wear them or removed them, perhaps because of superstitious reasons or simple neglect.\(^18\) There was a dueling impulse when it came to the identity discs that soldiers did wear. On the one hand the military wanted the civil
status of the individual to be guaranteed so that they could officially declared dead by the state, while on the other hand many of the soldiers’ comrades wanted the “body to retain its identity.”  

Only by 1917 did the French adopt a two-part disc to be worn on the wrist that would guarantee both that the person could be declared dead by the state, and so that the body could be identified for burial. Success varied with these practices, as out of the 1.4 million French soldiers “killed on enemy soil,” 252,900 were declared lost for unidentified, while of the 116,000 Americans killed in WWI, the government proudly boasted that only 2,896 remained unidentified.  

By the Second World War, records were standardized in the United States that many soldiers were able to be identified by their dental records at the time he was called up, a move that aided in the identification of not only a single soldiers, but the chance to identify fellow unit members buried with him. 

Even before the US entered the First World War, anti-war activists used the sheer scale of the war as a leverage point to keep the US from stepping into the fray. Carl Sandburg emerged as one of the leading poetic voices critical of the massive war across the ocean. Writing for the *International Socialist Review* as well as publishing in Chicago’s *Poetry* magazine, Sandburg received his biggest break with the 1916 publication of *Chicago and Other Poems*, which included the eleven poem section titled “War Poems (1914-1915).” The sections “Chicago Poems” and “War Poems (1914-1915)” reflected a new politics for Sandburg; many poems feature themes of contemporary class war and anti-war sentiments.  

Sandburg also used numbers in his anti-war poetry in an attempt to reveal the scale of the conflict never before seen in the world. Sandburg opens the “War Poems (1914-1915)” section with “Killers,” a five-stanza poem that describes the lives and new mission of the young men fighting in Europe. “Sixteen million men,” having been chosen for their “shining teeth, sharp eyes, hard legs,” and the warm blood that runs through their wrists, have a job, and, as Sandburg writes, “the sixteen million are killing . . . and killing and killing.”  

The poem expresses empathy for young men, who have been
robbed of their youth, and the author writes on that day he never forgets about them or the “homes and women, dreams and games” they left behind. But it is the repetition of the number sixteen million that echoes through the poem, lingering after completion. Sandburg effects this by closing the poem again describing the day of the men writing that they are “eating and drinking, toiling . . . on a long job of killing. Sixteen million men.” Sandburg also wrote a poem titled “Statistics,” where Napoleon shifts in his old sarcophagus as “twenty-one million men, Soldiers, armies, guns...Afoot, horseback, In the air, Under the sea” pass the entombed general. The eleven poems in this section reflect “killing, death, blood running in endless streams, the absolute absence of hope,” and common humanity had “been reduced by the war to one function:” killing.

Sandburg used the scale of the war, represented through his use of numbers, to drive home the pointlessness of the fighting and to promote that there would be no redemption in fighting this Great War. The anti-war voice harnessing the power numbers in 1916 foreshadowed their use by anti-war activists during the War on Terror. This case also highlights the threat to the state that numbers represent. If the state is not solely in control of the flow of numbers, or if it does not fashion a way to frame how they are interpreted, the state is opened to a powerful counterargument. Whereas the systemization of identification tags initially aided the state in counting the casualties of the war, these same numbers were then free to permeate society and citizens could decouple from the state’s disciplinary use (e.g., selling the sacrifice as one in service of the state). Once freed from their initial meaning, the state’s commemorative motive disappears, leaving the numbers free to be worked against the state that produced them. The effort of early anti-war activists could not match the ideological propaganda that President Wilson utilized in the build-up to U.S. entry into the war.

The ideological drive in WWI that pushed European belligerents to embrace mass killing and large casualty counts also affected Woodrow Wilson’s push to bring the United States into
the war. Wilson won the 1916 election under the slogan “He Kept Us Out of War,” but following a January 1917 German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare Wilson lost hope of that he may be able to mediate an end to the war. As the push to war came for Wilson, it was an ideological push which portrayed the war as a “Manichean struggle between good and evil.” Through the course of the war, James R. Andrews asserts that Wilson’s rhetoric would transform the “long-held vision of America as a shining example of liberty for the world to emulate to its embodiment as a self-sacrificing defender of liberty.” In order to win support for the war, the Wilson administration organized a massive public relations campaign. The Committee for Public Information (CPI) represented the government’s first organized efforts in propaganda. The CPI plastered the country with posters, speakers, and tracts that showed America facing a foe who “committed the most vile atrocities.” Depicting a nation ready to sacrifice everything for the good of mankind, and the promise of the American system of democratic governance, this was to be the “war to end all wars.” The massive propaganda campaign began to worry those concerned about the culpability of the citizenry and how reliably they could participate in the political process.

The experience of the First World War initially appears similar to that of the Civil War. There is a massive scale of destruction that begins to shake people to their core, questioning their relation to death and to their country. Yet WWI was larger than anything seen in the United States during their Civil War. This change in scale facilitated a need for new rhetorics, new ways to grasp, commemorate, and control the devastation and destruction the war to save democracy would bring. Commemoration of the dead evolved from the Civil War as states shifted their focus of the memorials, which until now had not included recognition of those never found after the war ended, as well as a recognition of the total effects of the war on non-combatants. The massive numbers of soldiers sent off to war, as well as the growing causalities, made it difficult to control the effect that these numbers would have on political discourse. Sandburg’s inclusion of numbers
into his “War Poems” collection reveals an opportunity for non-state actors seized in harnessing the power of numbers to use against the state’s push to war. While he was anti-war in the build-up to U.S. involvement, Sandburg eventually capitulated to the American march for war, which was successful in part due to the powerful efforts of the Committee of Public Information. The effects of the CPI and the widespread propaganda campaign would spur a discussion in democratic theory throughout and following the war.

**Democratic Theory Around the First World War**

While early wartime critics, like Sandburg, eventually relented to the propaganda machine of the state, Randolph Bourne maintained his opposition to the war while providing a new method for critiquing the state. As he saw his mentor John Dewey support the push to war, Bourne stood up to say that war was an uncontrollable force that could yield no international good, and no domestic reform. Responding to Dewey’s insistence that war could be an instrument of social reconstruction, Bourne wrote, “If the war is too strong for you to prevent, how is it going to be weak enough for you to control for your liberal purposes?”

When Dewey put forth the belief that force is the only thing in the world that affects anything, Bourne called for an aesthetic critique of the state that would not rely upon an impossible, careful control of force. Nathan Crick and Jeremy Engels argue that Bourne understood that the “triumph of the State was inevitable unless the power of technology, specifically communication technology, could be harnessed both by intellectuals and creative artists and channeled to achieve democratic ends.” The harnessing of technology to further debate and help communities come together is the first of the two faces of democratic rhetoric that Zarefsky writes is revealed by WWI. The second, seen in Wilson’s CPI, aimed at manufacturing consent and manipulating the emotions of the public. Bourne remained attentive to the destructive force of the state’s push to war, yet optimistic that
there could be an alternative. In its current form, though, Bourne only saw a receding need for debate and assent.

Bourne’s experiences before WWI lead him to believe that war did require the assent of the governed to be moved to war. Instead, it merely required acquiescence. Engels and Saas note that Bourne was not surprised by the manufactured jingoism of WWI, but Bourne expected Americans to be carried away by the enemyship of “the State.”34 The State for Bourne was a “mythical conception” that stands as an idea behind the nation (the non-political aspects of a people) and the government (the bureaucratic body manifested in the administration of laws and responsible for carrying out the public force by definite, fallible men).35 Bourne’s view that the state was an “organization of the herd to act offensively or defensively against another herd similarly organized” sets up his framing of how the culture adjusted to this new war-technique. He writes:

The kind of war which we are conducting is an enterprise which the American government does not have to carry on with hearty cooperation of the American people but only their acquiescence. And that acquiescence seems sufficient to float an indefinitely protracted war for vague or even largely uncomprehended and unaccepted purposes. Our resources in men and materials are vast enough to organize the war-technique without enlisting more than a fraction of people’s conscious energy.36

For Bourne, the acquiescence could be manufactured and mass-produced, as seen in Wilson’s propaganda campaign for the war. Even those who opposed the war found themselves never assenting the State’s demands, but many could be convinced that eventually dissent was pointless. The forward march of war appeared inexorable, so even the most hardened critics found themselves at a loss. Yet, Bourne maintains that the democratic age required a poetic rhetoric and an ethics of experimentalism.37 Not taken up in the face of the pressure to join the
battle in WWI, Bourne’s vision offers a glimmer of hope, albeit a faint one, that there exists a position for larger democratic participation in the face of a changing and expanding world.

Following the successful drive to war in Europe, a few social critics began to examine the ability of the American public to engage in a sustained debate about government actions. With the government’s propaganda campaign through the CPI, the theories engaged the likelihood that an average citizen could gain an equal footing with those holding, and in some cases withholding, particular information and statistics. Walter Lippmann penned one of the first normative critiques of popular participation in politics to gain ground at the beginning of the 20th century in the United States. In Lippmann’s 1922 book *Popular Opinion*, the columnist takes an elitist stance by discrediting anything that currently resembled a measurement of public opinion. Even before polling technologies progressed during the 1930s, Lippmann did not believe the population had the capacity to comment upon political happenings throughout the country. Because the country and its citizens were so spread out and disconnected from each other, he believes that their “ideas deal with events that are out of sight and hard to grasp.”

The rapid changes in culture and the speed with which news spread was not a similar situation faced when the Greeks theorized democracy. Lippmann notes that they did not face the problem that “arises because the pictures inside people’s heads do not automatically correspond with the world outside.” The American public, now provided with increased access to information, transportation, and new forms of leisure, is faced with an overly complex environment that is “altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting to deal with direct acquaintances.” He did not believe the public was equipped to deal with “so much subtly, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations.” In this sense, Lippmann finds no recourse in measuring the opinions of the public writ large and instead moves towards an elitist approach that would promote the work of trained specialists.

Lippmann’s critique also engages in the power the numbers that could be used to manipulate the public. Speaking broadly of the power of symbols as used by those in power,
Lippmann, who was active in the CPI, notes that symbols can conserve unity among the rank and file, where it can be used as a mechanism of solidarity as well as a mechanism of exploitation.\textsuperscript{41} One symbol used by the state in the aftermath of the war was the creation of cemeteries, which included a creation of plots for the “unknown” soldier. The rhetorical work of melding the growing casualties with a citizen’s duties to the state, similar to the Civil War, provides the state with shorthand that it can leverage in order to get their way. In the tombs of the unknowns, the state creates a symbol, collapsing the tens of thousands of unidentified soldiers into one marker. After doing all it could to identify and account for the soldiers under its care, the state turned to commemoration as a means of meeting its obligations to its citizens after the war ended.

Lippmann was not concerned with individual processing of facts or experiences, or the ability of an individual to learn. The “Omnicompetent citizen,” a straw man Lippmann creates in order to debunk, is condemned as an unobtainable fantasy because modern society does not allow for a citizen to be all knowing. If a newspaper attempts to cater to this ideal so that “every adult can arrive at an opinion on every moot topic, they fail, they are bound to fail, in any future one can conceive they will continue to fail.”\textsuperscript{42} Following this logic, the press will not be able to provide enough critical information to create a force of public opinion capable of understanding and influencing government institutions. Even if the press took steps towards educating the public, they would still remain susceptible to propaganda and stereotypes.

Following closely behind Lippmann’s condemnation of a citizen’s ability to register a worthwhile opinion, John Dewey’s \textit{The Public & Its Problems} proceeded with the purpose of instilling faith in the potential for the public to come together as a community to solve their problems. Dewey sought to recreate an ideal where the public could emerge from that which eclipsed them. He agrees with Lippmann that “genuinely public policy cannot be generated unless it be informed by knowledge,” and this knowledge can only be found through accurate reporting and investigation.\textsuperscript{43} Though he follows a similar narrative in the reasons for the demise of the
public, Dewey is optimistic that returning to the ideal of a close-knit community where citizens will be able to engage each other and converse about public issues can maximize public involvement. He believes that “public opinion, even if it happens to be correct, is intermittent when it is not the product of methods of investigation and reporting constantly at work.” Dewey maintains optimism for the over-burdened modern citizen through an engaged community where people can come together in conversation to discuss public issues and form an opinion. The average citizen need not be swept aside in favor of expert opinion. Instead, Dewey’s ideal community produced a space for average citizen input that did not require the government to bypass their input for that of an expert. Dewey’s vision may take longer, but in the wake of the Great War’s destruction, a slower procession may be called for.

The First World War escalated the rate of death experienced during the American Civil War, but applied it to a global context. The state maintained a biopolitical stake, as evidenced by the creation of further cemeteries and methods of memorialization (including ones specifically for unidentified soldiers). However, the commemorative motive dominated the state’s use of numbers during WWI signals an intensification of the power of numbers, moving beyond the biopolitical into a regime of numbers. Numbers begin to organize thoughts and are included in arguments for and against the war. In this instance, numbers begin to break free of the moorings of the state, and anti-war groups are able to be use numbers as invention resources to challenge the state’s march to war. Around this period, though, there is an increased worry in the potential for citizens to comprehend the complicated goings-on of the state, including the increased use of numbers.

The CPI reveals the expansion of “communication technologies” that Bourne discusses to expand the reach of the rhetoric of numbers. The state was still trying to commemorate the dead, which is an incredible challenge during the war. But communication technologies allow for the articulation of control motivations on an unprecedented scale. Zarefsky argues that the
“realization that people were, in fact, influenced by such messages gave pause to those who had been confident that even a large democratic public could reason rhetorically in search of practical wisdom.” This process frightened Bourne and is one of the issues that set off the Lippmann-Dewey debate. The Lippmann-Dewey debate foreshadowed the turn during Vietnam and the Cold War toward science and technical sphere, further removing citizens from active participation in the democratic process.

The Cold War and the Rise of Experts

As the United States entered the Cold War, many things were changing. For one, the massive build-up of armed forces and deployment around the world to fight World War II was winding down. Nearly sixteen million men and women served in the military during World War II. A second change involved shifting global powers. As the continental European powers recovered from the devastation wrought across their landscape, the enmity between the United States and the Soviet Union became the dominant global conflict. A third change that would take time to adjust to was the awesome power of nuclear technology that was developed and deployed by the United States. In this third area, there was also a growing concern that the technology would be available to the Soviet Union, destabilizing the small moments of surefootedness the U.S. felt upon the end of the war. The Cold War developed as a replacement for the hot war that American had just victoriously emerged from, and the Cold War brought with it a focus on science, numbers, and investment in experts that affected how Americans thought about the prospects of nuclear war.

In turn with these geopolitical changes emerges a change in how numbers were used in political rhetoric. The commemorative motive and the control motive exist side-by-side. The control motive becomes more dominant during the twentieth century expansion of biopolitics as
the government shifts away from decades of active wars and mounting death tolls to a Cold War with the aura of nuclear war with the potential for even more devastation. The discussion of the missile gap reveals a new exigence for the creation of numerical rhetorics, where the power is invested in a select few who have the knowledge and insight to deploy them. Numerical rhetorics are rhetorical deployment of numbers that are invented and invested with a meaning that often goes unevaluated. As Susan Herbst argues, numbers are used in public discourse for two intertwined reasons. The first is that we quantify to “act in the most efficient manner possible,” calling up Weber’s theorizing of rationalization. On the other hand, we use numbers in order to communicate authority in public debate. Numerical rhetorics require investigation for their invested meanings, but also for the potential hierarchal relationships that are created by their deployment. During the Cold War, these rhetorics pushed the possibility of public input further from the realm of political influence, retaining a technical sphere reserved for policy discussion. The quest for control also emerges in Vietnam policy, where Robert McNamara’s quantitative thinking and reasoning stripped those with practical experience fighting wars in favor of his numerical output. The foregrounding of numerical rhetoric in Vietnam contributed to some of the most disastrous policies and the atrocities that followed from those orders. Through the Cold War and Vietnam, as the motive of control dominate numerical rhetorics from the state and the commemorative motive fades slightly in importance, a move that attempted to further isolate the American people from democratic discussions.

The United States had a new relationship with science following the government’s decision to drop nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In his analysis of the rhetorical origins of the Cold War, David Tietge writes that science had risen to a new level by showing that science was an awesome power that was capable of not just destroying buildings or killing soldiers, but leveling entire cities. Tietge says the implications were enormous because “the fallout was more than radioactive; it was ideological.” The ideological power is visible in the
president’s first statement after dropping the first bomb in Hiroshima. Truman noted that the United States had spent two billion dollars on “the greatest scientific gamble in history—and won.” Truman did not direct our attention to the size of the project, nor the cost, but he directed us to witness “the achievement of scientific brains in putting together infinitely complex pieces of knowledge held by many men in different fields of science into a workable plan.” Science succeeded in ways it had not in the past. The emphasis on science and success allowed Truman and others to leave important elements like the cost—both human and financial—of the effort out of sight. Instead, science was the savior that day, deployed in hopes of ending the conflict sooner with fewer casualties for the U.S. Tietge finds that Hiroshima reinforced the ideological faith in the power of science and technology, a process that had been evolving since the Enlightenment. This was a faith that “science would help us overcome any obstacles, any conflict, any problem. Rational thinking and the scientific method were the panacea for all our social, political, economic, and diplomatic ills.” By developing the atomic bomb before our enemies could, the U.S. proved that it was the master of science. Science functioning as an ideology influenced the way that the U.S. proceeded through the Cold War and how it would react in future conflicts including Vietnam, including the promotion of experts that kept the policy making out of the grasp of the average citizen.

The trust that citizens and the government placed in science and the scientists as experts could be seen in the popular press. Robert Oppenheimer, one of the minds behind the development of the atomic bomb, wrote an a piece for Scientific American in which he made an appeal for “agreement and understanding from an increasing number of men who are not scientists, but who are nevertheless concerned that advances in science make the greatest possible contribution to human welfare.” There is an onus placed on the average citizen to at least be partially conversational in understanding the true developments of science if it will be used to its greatest purposes. For both the civilian and government representative alike, there is a need to
understand the scientific project if we want to reap the fullest benefit, but also to keep the ambitions of science in check. Oppenheimer believed this was possible, because “scientific progress, which has so profoundly altered both the material and spiritual quality of our civilization, is not the sole root of its present crisis. But few men can be doubtful of its decisive part.”

Tietge writes that science has not only affected material changes in the American cultural landscape, but also “the spiritual nature of our social consciousness.” The spiritual nature of science in the American consciousness during the Cold War emerges because science holds a mystique as a problem solver partly because the scientific education the average citizen receives is “usually incomplete, providing just enough to whet the imagination and to encourage faith in scientific systems if not actual knowledge of them.”

The promotion of science and the scientist as expert left the average citizen on the outside of important political decisions that would affect the country for decades to come.

Echoing the Lippmann-Dewey debate over the capability of citizens vis-à-vis experts that served as the foundation of political communication, Thomas Farrell and others continued the discussion fifty years later in rhetorical studies. Farrell looked into what sort of “knowledge” was pertinent “to the practical art of rhetoric” and necessary for deliberative debate, and he called this “social knowledge.” Farrell defined social knowledge as that which “comprises relationships among problems, persons, interests, and actions, which imply (when accepted) certain notions of preferable public behavior.” In opposition to technical or specialized knowledge, which is “perceived correspondence to the external world” social knowledge is “actualized through the decision and action of the audience.” Farrell sees social knowledge as holding the ability to be “rhetorically impactful,” but it is audience dependent. The social knowledge, even with new information flowing in, must rest upon basic assumptions of “audience consensus on certain problems, interests, and actions.”

Building off Farrell’s work on social knowledge, G. Thomas Goodnight looked into the effects of the personal and technical spheres intruding where there
should be public spheres of argument. Goodnight notes that there are times when arguments from
the technical sphere will move into the public sphere. Instead of relying strictly on the forms of
judgment that are used in the technical realm, and while still relegating participation to
“representative spokesmen,” the technical-turned-public forum “would provide a tradition of
argument such that its speakers would employ common language, values, and reasoning so that
the disagreement could be settled to the satisfaction of all concerned.” But one of the most
important aspects is that the interests in the public realm are extended beyond the private, special
interests and suffice for the needs of the entire community. Though this ideal sounds nice,
Goodnight noted that too often the people are not left with enough information upon which to act.
Without supplying the people with an understanding of why these things happened, or the
interestedness of sources used, there would be no chance the people, if offered, could act.

Critics note that much discussion of nuclear war, disarmament, and policy is shrouded in
technical jargon and rhetoric that alienates average citizens. Sam Totten refers to this jargon-filled
rhetoric as “nukespeak.” The jargon, euphemisms, and acronyms serve “to cloud the true nature
of nuclear weapon systems, nuclear fighting concepts, and nuclear war itself.” Consistently the
use of this rhetoric alienated average citizens from many of the decisions that could affect their
future, reserving the decisions to be made by experts. Edward Schiappa defines two strategies of
nukespeak that served this end. The first strategy is *domestication*, which is a rhetorical strategy
in which nuclear concepts are introduced into the public discourse in a “non-threatening manner.”

*Bureaucratization* is the second process that explicates strategy through the “acronyms and
sanitized jargon.” In both cases, Schiappa concludes, “It is clear that with regard to nuclear
issues the public has been conceived as a crowd to be calmed rather than co-creators of public
policy” (italics in original). Though the process of domestication makes the topic of nuclear
rhetorics available to the public, it does so in a trivial manner, further removing people from the
public and policy conversations.
Rhetorical scholars took up the dramatistic elements of the debate that turned nuclear weapons into a meaningful condition of their social reality. Tracing the nuclear debate throughout, Barry Brummett argues that the bomb was used as a God term, or the “perfect culmination of the juggernaut of war.” The prime example of this rhetoric was Herman Kahn’s 1962 work *Thinking About the Unthinkable*, which features the dominant metaphor of war as a game and strategy. Kahn achieved notoriety with the publication of *On Thermonuclear War*, which, outside of an allusion to Carl von Clausewitz’s classic *On War*, argued that nuclear war was both feasible and winnable for the U.S. *Thinking About the Unthinkable* attempted to make the argument easier to understand for laypeople, but still argued in a cold, calculating way about the possibility of nuclear war. Brummett contends that vocabulary of games and strategies leads Kahn to use dispassionate language of “one who reports on how the abstract contest goes.” In the book, death is reduced to “kill ratios, terror to countervalue, and horror to deterrence.” The focus on counting intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs) removes Kahn from the reality of the destruction such a game could entail.

The counting game also facilitates the linear progression of the game metaphor, as the player (country) with the largest stockpile of weapons would be more able to defeat their opponent. In a 1977 speech at the University of Rochester, former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown used the term “strategy” repeatedly to describe preparation for strategic nuclear planning, strategic nuclear force, and strategic balance. The strategy culminates in potential crossfire of megaton missiles that Brown describes as “exchange” between “sides.” Brummett finds that while Brown announces that he wants missiles to be controlled, his vocabulary betrays him, saying that for Brown, “Although the man may deplore nuclear bombs, his vocabulary celebrates them.” The power of the game and strategy metaphors was so powerful that they allowed the rhetors to ignore the dire consequences that a nuclear war would bring to the populace.
Threats of mutually assured destruction, and war games that remove the potential effects should such exercises be carried out might initially appear at odds with the concerns of biopolitics, but it should not be. The discussion of wiping out entire continents people, as terrifying as it may seem, is still premised on the preservation and promotion of life of a the attacking population. The effects of biopolitical thinking, for Foucault, began to shift in the 18th century away from an absolute right of the sovereign and were replaced “by a relative logic of calculating, measuring, and comparing.” Foucault writes, “It is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility. Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendor…” The investment in experts and their use of numbers beyond the conceptual grasp of average citizens, and even themselves, reveals a motive of control that emerges from biopolitical thinking. Beyond scaring the population with game talk and the potential of nuclear annihilation, the experts made their numerical case after what one would naturally assume to be careful calculation and reflection.

The “missile gap,” or alleged U.S. inferiority in strategic nuclear weapons and launch systems, emerged at a critical juncture in the Cold War (1957-1962). Kennedy invented the issue as his star rose in the Senate, and used it to propel him to the presidency. Once there, he awkwardly walked back his claims and admitted that the missile gap was a complete myth, and that the U.S. maintained a substantial advantage of the U.S.S.R. in terms of nuclear weapons. Christopher Preble writes that Kennedy was able to effectively use the missile gap in his ascent to the highest office because it tapped into the deep and enduring political and economic themes that separated Eisenhower's vision from Kennedy's. The missile gap fit the exigence for Kennedy in 1960 because it was a "powerful one-two punch" against the otherwise popular Eisenhower. With the first punch, Kennedy charged Eisenhower with indifference toward the Soviet gains and the apparent U.S. decline. In August 1957 the Soviet Union launched the world's first ICBM, and
then on October 4, 1957, the Soviets successfully launched Sputnik, the world's first Earth-orbiting satellite. Public anxiety remained high throughout the late 1950s and into the 1960s, especially as the missile gap gained traction in the press. The second punch of the missile gap landed with Kennedy blaming Eisenhower for "throwing hundreds of thousands out of work because of his alleged defense cuts." Eisenhower proposed large cutbacks for the Pentagon as he began to place greater emphasis on nuclear deterrence and less on regular ground troops.

The discussion of the missile gap raises questions regarding how the American public could be lead to believe this gap existed, but also how a rising senator and president could come to believe in the existence of a mythical gap. The pervasive and plausible fear of a full-scale nuclear war increased the probability of the missile gap myth taking hold. A culture existing around game theories discussed above emerged as a prime location for those in the media to report a growing missile gap and deplore the potential results. Stewart and Joe Alsop collaborated on a syndicated column for the New York Herald, in which they decried the missile gap and the potential economic effects of Eisenhower’s New Look policies. On August 1, 1958, Joe Alsop wrote a critical column titled “Our Government Untruths.” The article decried the “gross untruth concerning the national defense” of the U.S., and it declared that Eisenhower was either “consciously misleading” the public or was terribly misinformed. Following on the heels of recent Soviet advances, Alsop projected the following gaps through the early 1960s:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>U.S. ICBMs</th>
<th>Soviet ICBMs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>130 (plus a few submarine-borne Polaris, perhaps)</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>130 (plus more Polaris)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71
Preble points out that Alsop’s numbers are misleading because the numbers “did not match official opinion within the intelligence community as pressed in the several national intelligence estimates (NIEs) prepared in late 1957 and early 1958.” At this time Kennedy did not have access to classified documents that would alert him to the intelligence projections that the Soviets could have, not “have in place” as Alsop writes, 500 ICBMs by 1960 without any further predictions. Like Kennedy, the American public believed there was certainty that the Soviets were accelerating their production of weapons enough to warrant concern, and eventually action. Kennedy delivered a speech on August 14 on the subject of the missile gap and his ideas for measures to enhance U.S. security, using information from Alsop and other critics of Eisenhower, including Henry Kissinger. The speech tied in the obvious security critique that the missile gap symbolized, as well as an economic critique of the New Plan and Eisenhower’s fiscal constraint that Kennedy saw as harming the U.S. standing in the world.

By promoting the missile gap as a means of criticizing the Eisenhower administration, Kennedy was also able to carve out more room from which to develop a new foreign policy platform. The public is frequently apprehensive to taking positions on foreign policy, often deferring to official interpretations of events. This is further exacerbated when the media does not provide quality information, as was seen in Kennedy’s retelling of the misleading missile gap numbers. Like many Democrats, Kennedy opposed President Eisenhower’s reduction of the military budget and used the missile gap as a means to promote his Flexible Response strategy over Eisenhower’s New Look. The New Look strategy would have reduced military spending in favor of increased investment in nuclear weapons as the main deterrent. Kennedy’s Flexible Response increased defense spending, on both conventional and nuclear forces, and these increases continued after seeing intelligence data that showed a substantial American lead in nuclear capabilities. Much of Kennedy’s early term can be categorized by bold and even
arrogant mistakes that brought the country to the brink of nuclear war. Kennedy actually believed in the missile gap, and even after being given the classified intelligence to debunk it, it took Kennedy nearly ten months to publicly state that the missile gap was not a serious concern. New Economics, Kennedy’s economic philosophy that supported the New Frontier and Flexible Response, according to Preble, must share in some blame for the quagmire in Vietnam and the stagflation of the 1970s. Preble writes that Flexible Response “opened the door to questionable military actions, including a deepening commitment in Southeast Asia,” because Kennedy and Johnson would no longer be required to justify military expenditures according to narrowly defined national security needs. In peripheral engagements Eisenhower would have deemed as unessential, Kennedy and Johnson pushed forward in Southeast Asia, in part due to a quantitative logic that would only grow more destructive in Vietnam.

Kennedy fostered and furthered the rule of the experts foretold by Lippmann after WWI. The promotions of science/scientist to expert in public policy, paired with the mythical missile gap, served to alienate the populace from actively participating in the public policy debates that helped to shape the Cold War. In part, the metaphors and frightening descriptors of the enemy facilitated the process of keeping the public debate in the realm of the technical sphere. Biopolitics can aid in the investigation into the technical sphere is a concern, as biopolitics is concerned with the relations of dominance and the creation of hierarchies. During the Cold War, the use of experts and their particular deployment of numbers, either real or imagined, created a relationship that elevated the opinions and contributions of experts over the average citizen at the polls. These numerical rhetorics exhibit a rhetoric of control that seeks to limit the realm of acceptable debate, and changes the grounds upon which some policies can be argued, as well as who is eligible to argue them. Also inherent in this debate is an element of secrecy, and how certain elements purported to protect national security remain confidential. During the Vietnam
War, many of these concerns would repeat, aided in part by a quantitative approach to all defense concerns.

Vietnam, Rationalization, and the Growing Power of Numbers

The numerical examination of the Vietnam and Cold War reveals an administration that grounded decisions through rational, quantitative measures. For the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Robert Strange McNamara was the mind responsible for many of these decisions. Before examining the workings of McNamara as Secretary of Defense for most of the 1960s, this section will examine some of Max Weber’s theories of rationality to better understand the mind and actions of an administration that placed numbers at the forefront of their decision-making. Any study of rationality benefits from a discussion of Weber’s construction of formative and instrumental rationality. As one of the forefathers of sociology, Max Weber’s work with rationality and the protestant ethic are unparalleled. Weber was developing his ideas around the time of WWI, as he was watching the expansion of biopolitics and the motive of control in Europe. Both of these concepts dealt with the development of modern capitalism, and now can be seen in discussions of modern warfare. The Protestant work ethic describes how many citizens in the countries of northern Europe engage in secular work and develop their own trade and businesses, resulting in an accumulation of wealth. Rationalization examines the processes in which man progressively sought to administer control over situations by using calculations. If an individual or an organization were able to increase the standard operating procedures to accomplishing a goal, one would then be that much closer to mastering or controlling the task. For Weber, this operated on a micro and a macro level.

On a micro level, Weber wrote that individuals that work alone, or within larger organizations, often engage in a form of instrumental reasoning to accomplish their goals. This is
a means/ends rationality where one sets goals and determines the most effective means of achieving that goal. Weber called this formal rationality. He defined formal rationality in terms of calculability in *Economy and Society*:

A system of economic activity will be called formally rational according to the degree in which the provision for needs, which is essential to every rational economy, is capable of being expressed in numerical calculable terms, and is so expressed.\(^8^0\)

Part of formal rationality’s allure stems from the fact that in scientifically or technical aspects of society, it is considered value neutral. It is empirically based knowledge calculation with “universal application.”\(^8^1\) All one must do in when engaging in formal rationality is to think of the means, what goes into the cost of completing X. Thus, the focus is narrow, on a simple goal, and all other issues are pushed aside. On the other side of formal rationality, or, even more so in a dialectical relationship with it, is substantive rationality.

While formal rationality demands close calculations, substantive rationality focuses on the values or the worth of the goal at hand. It is an evaluative concept that looks at how well an economic system provides for the “needs, ends, or values of a specific group.”\(^8^2\) Instead of squabbling over how the raw cost of iron ore is growing geometrically and money can be saved if the company moves production overseas, substantive rational decision take into consideration the values or convictions upon which the company was founded. In a wartime scenario, one can ponder the decision to send American soldiers into battle, weighing not only the money and resources that will be expended in a mission, but the impact that losing any number of American lives will have on the public and the mission. The mores of society and even the concept of the social contract are examples of substantively rational criteria, both of which can be used to critique and interrupt the formal rational action. The conflict between the pure means of formal rationality and ultimate ends of substantive rationality is constant. Weber noted that the antagonism between the formal rationality represented by the modern capitalist order and the
The substantive rationality of community values and ethics is “one of the most important sources of all social problems.”\textsuperscript{83}

The force with which formal rationality has moved into our daily lives is part and parcel to what Weber called rationalization. Rationalization is manifested in the “escalating importance of technical proficiency, precision, and specialization.”\textsuperscript{84} A potentially positive result of rationalization is the increase in knowledge, driven in part by formal rationalization. On the other end, however, there are the process of growing impersonality and bureaucratization, and enhanced control, a topic covered later by Foucault. Weber wrote about the bureaucratic means of domination and how this rational administration entailed dehumanization. The administrative process required complete elimination from official business of “love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation.”\textsuperscript{85} Taking the process even further, Weber wrote that with more bureaucratic administration there was a greater chance that an individual is reduced to a “small cog in the ceaselessly moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march.”\textsuperscript{86} Though the process of accounting for the means, or the formal rationality, is considered neutral in its execution, the consequences of such actions are not neutral, which raises the questions of how good X is for a society. Weber’s analysis, as will be seen below, enables us to inquire about the end result, the ultimate end, of a decision that affects millions. The addition of Foucault’s analyses of power and government rationalities is helpful because they encourage us to “draw out the inherently political character of technologies of calculations.”\textsuperscript{87}

The administration of war planning during the Vietnam War showcased one of the most quantitatively driven minds attempting to subject a battle to the power of a spreadsheet. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara brought his quantitative orientation that served him in the motor industry to bear on the Department of Defense. McNamara and other WWII vets who had a college degree were brought to the Ford Motor Company and nicknamed the Whiz Kids, because
of their “cerebral approach to decision making and their youth.” McNamara and the others soon rose to senior leadership positions in the company, and succeeded in changing the economic outlook for the company. McNamara was the first non-Ford family member tapped to run the Ford Motor Company in 1960. His stay was short-lived, as president-elect Kennedy had his sights set on McNamara to help run the Defense Department. The Kennedy administration wanted McNamara to run the Pentagon with “single-minded purpose and sureness” that would help them win the Cold War, traits that would impact McNamara’s decision-making during the development of the conflict in Vietnam.

In the administration of war, it pays to be merciless. But, it is also important to not appear coldblooded. The use of numbers and statistics has increased in the facilitation of war during Vietnam and after. One area that McNamara affected change in the administration of the Pentagon was by transforming the operation of the Department of Defense (DoD) to reflect a more formally rational mode of thinking. As described by Michele Chwastiak, the implantation of the Planning, Programming and Budgeting (PPB) into the DoD “redefined the normative and cognitive facets of defense political process” in a way that made military expertise—something McNamara lacked—discredited, while increasing the role of quantitative rationality—an area where McNamara excelled—to authority and legitimacy. One result of this move would be to elevate the “the measurable and instrumental characteristics of war (e.g., body counts, tonnage of bombs dropped, etc.) to truth, while rendering the qualitative aspects (e.g., social relations, emotions, ingenuity, etc.) invisible.” Many within the DoD resisted McNamara’s changes, and even early in his tenure McNamara was known as being overly arrogant and dismissive of the input provided by the Joint Chiefs. The formally rational was raised above the substantively rational. This process of quantification allowed for a way of “making decision without seeming to decide.” The effects of deciding-without-deciding were tragic and appalling.
McNamara’s running of the DoD produced a method of fighting a war that prioritized a numerical metric that would indicate whether or not the country succeeded in its mission in Vietnam. With his statistical mind at work, McNamara foregrounded these statistics in his reports and suggestions to the president. The managers of the war focused on achieving a “crossover point,” or a moment in when American soldiers would be killing more Vietnamese enemies than Vietnamese could replace. Before the United States placed large amounts of American troops on the ground, McNamara and Johnson opted for a large-scale bombing campaign called “Rolling Thunder.” The Rolling Thunder campaign dropped two to three times as many bombs as were dropped in Western Europe during all of the World War II. The Rolling Thunder operation emerged as a gradual increase of aerial bombing, mirroring the gradual increase of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Though the U.S. had been involved in Vietnam for ten years in 1965, starting by aiding the French colonial powers and then adding more military advisors under Kennedy, Johnson expanded the roll after the Gulf of Tonkin incident and further attacks by North Vietnamese on American troops in South Vietnam. Johnson thought the bombing campaign would show the South Vietnamese government that the U.S. was serious in helping them defend South Vietnam, and to prod the South Vietnamese government into reform. Johnson said, “I saw our bombs as my political resources for negotiating a peace. One the one hand, our planes and our bombs could be used as carrots for the South…. On the other hand, our bombs could be used as sticks against the North, pressuring North Vietnam to stop its aggression against the South.” Initially planned to only last a month or two, Operation Rolling Thunder continued to expand, as no one could foresee the North Vietnamese withstanding such an intense bombing campaign for over two years. The only restraint showed in Operation Rolling Thunder was sparring the two largest cities in North Vietnam, though from 1965 to 1968, thousands of sorties dropped 640,000 pounds of bombs in the North.
The continued bombing and changes in military bombing were all predicated on achieving the crossover point that could not be achieved. To keep track of this statistic, McNamara authorized statistical analyses of “enemy attacks, measurements of the security statuses of each and every South Vietnamese community, tabulations of enemy activity rates, and reams of other numbers” that poured out of the U.S. military. The most basic and memorable measurement that served as a metric for success was the body count. The only way to know when one reaches the crossover point would be by counting the enemy dead. Assistant Secretary of Defense Alain Enthoven, one of McNamara’s Whiz Kids under his command who focused on the quantitative arguments and evidence, said that body counts were “the measure of success.”

Predicating the entire strategy of the war on an indicator of Vietnamese corpses resonates with formal rationality while entirely ignoring what it would mean for Vietnamese civilians. The pressure to produce the body count flowed from the Pentagon to General Westmoreland, commander of U.S. operations Vietnam, and further through the chain of command. The count became vitally important to officers, as Gibson notes:

Producing a high body count was crucial for promotion in the officer corps. Many high-level officers established “production quotas” for their units, and systems of “debt” and “credit” to calculate exactly how efficiently subordinate units and middle-management personnel performed. Different formulas were used, but the commitment to war was a rational production process was common to all.

Turse notes that body counts were everywhere, and in interviews with Vietnam veterans, they reflected upon the ubiquity of them. A combat medic with the 9th Infantry Division recalled the constant repetition, “Get the body count. Get the body count. Get the body count. It was prevalent everywhere.” From officers to the drafted, numbers were all that mattered.

Civilians and prisoners soon were included in the body counts. The pressure to reach numbers led some soldiers to fabricate kills by including civilian deaths. Turse cites sworn
statements from soldiers collected in the National Archives and Record Administration’s collected Military Police Reports. After members of the 196th Infantry Brigade in Quang Tin Provence opened fire on Viet Cong in 1969, a patrol was dispatched to the kill zone. Upon arrival, one gunner noted that among the dead and wounded were Vietnamese children. In their testimony, soldiers reported seeing the dead children being listed either as VC (Viet Cong) or NVA (North Vietnamese Army troops). As the numbers grew, and the focus on them intensified, the rational drive to meet a specified quota pushed soldiers to include civilian casualties in their official “body count.” Cold-blooded killing of prisoners or detainees added to the body count. The pressure to accrue the necessary numbers is reflected in one of the most common phrases in the war, “If it’s dead and Vietnamese, it’s VC.” The pressure put on troops to reach a body count resulted in inflated figures that would skew the numbers that McNamara demanded to determine the crossover point, and thus defeated the quantitative focus on body counts.

McNamara defended the use of body counts in his memoirs, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Losses of Vietnam*, by saying that body counts were not a reflection of his obsession with numbers. He wrote that the “things that you can count, you ought to count. Loss of life is one of those when you are fighting a war of attrition.” A more complicated picture of McNamara emerges in Errol Morris’ Academy Award-winning documentary, *The Fog of War*. In the documentary, McNamara walked through his role in both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Only offering a half-hearted apology for the excessive destruction wrought by his formally rational approach to the Vietnam War, McNamara is heard on tapes with Kennedy promoting an exit strategy before the bulk of American soldiers would arrive. In the end, McNamara failed at honoring many of his own “life lessons” that guide the film, including “empathize with your enemy” and “rationality will not save us.” McNamara mentioned the import of empathy when discussing the Cuban Missile Crisis, and he discussed how Kennedy had
to decide which Khrushchev messages they should acknowledge, the one that basically offered to
take the missiles out if the US did not invade or the one that said if the US attacked the Soviets
were prepared to respond with massive military power. In the case of Vietnam, there was no
attempt to sympathize or understand the enemy. Instead, McNamara and Johnson proceeded to
escalate the conflict, attempting to fight a quantitatively based war of attrition. Instead of fighting
a limited war with an economically rational enemy, the U.S. faced Vietnamese who were fighting
a total war for their independence. The push for the crossover point led to the death of 58,000
American, and around one million Vietnamese killed, a total that is proportionally 100 times
greater than the American death toll.

Administration rhetoric that demonized the Vietnamese population and painted them as
savages bears some responsibility for the many atrocities committed against the Vietnamese
population, whether mass killings like My Lai or individual incidents of killing any citizen who
ran from an approaching helicopter. Robert Ivie traced the essential characteristics for victimage
rhetorics of war, starting with Johnson’s insistence on the aggression-from-the-North thesis. Ivie
states that the administration portrayed the enemy as a “savage, i.e., as an aggressor, driven by
irrational desires of conquest. This move allows for the U.S. portray themselves as the rational,
tolerant, more pacifistic, and thus being drawn into battle reluctantly in order to preserve the
national interest. In many of Johnson’s speeches, the president portrayed the North as the party
unwilling to negotiate. Johnson portrayed the U.S. as the party offering up talks and even
bombing halts if the North would come to the table. This continued through his March 31, 1968
renunciation speech, where he informed the nation he would not seek his party’s nomination. He
told the American public that “for years” our government representatives have travelled the world
to find a basis for peace talks. The North Vietnamese had been willing to negotiate, but it was
the US that rejected the offers. On April 3, 1968, Hanoi sent the White House a message saying
they were ready to talk. The talks were announced by Johnson to the American public on May 3,
and began in Paris on the tenth of May.\textsuperscript{112} Though Johnson did not actually carry out his pledge to ground “all air, naval, and artillery bombardment of North Vietnam” until October 31, 1968.\textsuperscript{113} By creating a savage enemy for the public and himself to consume, Johnson’s rhetoric and directives created a rhetorical landscape where wholesale slaughter of villages became acceptable, and many escaped prosecution for their actions.

The Johnson administration continued to problematically represent the war effort in a way that would only lead to further destruction and ultimately failure of the mission. Cal Logue and John Patton write that Johnson tended to view complex events in simplistic frames of reference, and that he “was conditioned by experience and history for aggressive and resolute acts.”\textsuperscript{114} Johnson’s predication toward simple explanation allowed for the quantitative prosecution of McNamara’s Pentagon to gain traction at the expense of experience on the ground. The disconnect between the representations presented by Johnson and the administration (e.g., positive portrayal of progress backed up by statistics) contrasted with the world soldiers on the ground faced. The “systematic falsification of the body count reports” had lead General Westmorland to “conclude that the ‘cross-over point’ had been reached” in the fall of 1967.\textsuperscript{115} Soldiers noticed the contrast between administrative projections and their experiences from the start, but the Tet Offensive in January 1968, the discrepancy between administration claims and reality dramatically affected Johnson’s approval rating amongst the public and troops willingness to believe further intelligence reports.\textsuperscript{116} A simple application of cost-benefit analysis contributed to “transforming the planning for war into a routine resource allocation exercise, rather than an insane preparation for genocide.” The budgeting and counting process is a social process, and has social implication, and should not be viewed solely as an accounting technique. To view it only as an accounting technique ignores the profound political and rhetorical consequences that budgeting and accounting has.
At the highest levels, the United States institutionalized a formal rationality that distances those making decision from the consequences of said decisions. The increased power to make these decisions is facilitated by what Bruno Latour called “action at a distance.” Action at a distance is required when we make decision about situation without a degree of intimacy of how the everyday life is organized and lived there. Decisions are made on based off information that takes complex issues, economies, and lives, and transforms them into “comparable and objectifiable chunks.” The action at a distance is allowed because we see these numbers, these calculations, as somehow being an acceptable piece of evidence, at the cost of on-the-ground experience or even a basic understanding or empathizing with the enemy.

**Summary**

The cold, calculating drive of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold and Vietnam wars reflected an ongoing evolution in the role that rationalization played in politics as it did in capitalism. The drive toward efficiency, especially when driven solely by the practical rational concerns, can contribute to the atrocities and near global destruction that could have come from nuclear war. Keeping the public outside of the policy decisions that actively affected their lives further facilitated this problem. These effects reflect the state’s motivation of control in their deployment of numerical rhetorics. The numerical rhetorics reveal a biopolitical concern in what Foucault referred to as the “calculated management of life.” By paying attention to calculations and numerical organization of life are important steps in pointing out the political character of the calculations that impact the lives of those under the government. By promoting the scientist to a savior, and holding quantitative analysis above other forms of evidence, the government decreased the efficacy of the average citizen to understand and engage elements of the debate. Yet, as we will see in chapter 4, citizens are actively trying to marshal numbers toward their own
ends, and at times are actively contesting the state’s position of power and control when it comes to numbers.

Through this first component of a genealogy of numbers in American war rhetoric, there is evidence of intensification in the power that numbers have been given, and a shift in the motives of deployed numerical rhetorics. The increased circulation of these numbers helped spark the Lippmann-Dewey debate over whether one should trust the average citizen's ability to engage in the democratic process or place more decision making responsibilities in the hands of experts. The important discussion in political theory foreshadowed the state’s shift toward the control motive following the Second World War. A hierarchy that placed experts including scientists or those with knowledge of a “missile gap” at the top yielded a situation where the average citizen was supposed to defer to those with that particular knowledge. Throughout the Cold War these experts would begin prioritizing numbers and game theory. Both moves created situations where one could act without seeming to act, and where one could remove one's self from the horrendous consequences of those actions.

The impact of the control motive was felt in the military as well when Robert McNamara prioritized a quantitative approach to war, giving it greater weight than experienced soldiers that occupied positions of power within the Pentagon. The investment in quantitative thinking is also reflective of a biopolitical mode of thinking, one which seeks to count, calculate, and hierarchize potential battle plans. In Vietnam, McNamara's running of the Defense Department and his facilitation of the Vietnam War exposed the devastating results of such rationalized action. Vietnam is the culmination in the growth of numbers in war. Throughout the war, there is a feeling that numbers are dictating action (e.g., a focus on the body count, multiple massacres, etc.), alienating the soldiers from decisions, and further removing the citizen from the democratic debate at hand. Chapter 3 will investigate how the Bush and Obama administrations have adopted
the use of numbers in the War on Terror, further leading to an alienation of citizens from the important decisions being made in their name.

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7 Luc Capdevila and Danièle Voldman, *War Dead: Western Societies and the Casualties of War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 11. Today the either/or distinction between soldier as hero and soldier as victim would be overblown. These two rhetorics thus live side-by-side, as we still celebrate soldiers as heroes, even today. But we also talk about them as victims.

8 Capdevila and Voldman, *War Dead*, 12.

9 Capdevila and Voldman’s argue that the change manifested after WWI was the view of victimhood of those who died in the war. The same would not hold for future war memorials, which may affirm contemporary US imperialism under the guise of a memorial to WWII, or may honor the veterans and not their actions in Vietnam or Korea (see V. Balthrop, Carole Blair, and Neil Michel, “The Presence of the Present: Hijacking ‘The Good War’?,” *Western Journal of Communication* 74, no. 2 (2010): 170-207; Carole Blair, “Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric’s Materiality,” in *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed by Jack Selzer and Sharon

10 Capdevila and Voldman, *War Dead*, 15.

11 Capdevila and Voldman, *War Dead*, 16.

12 Capdevila and Voldman, *War Dead*, 16.


14 Capdevila and Voldman, *War Dead*, 17.


17 Blair et al., “The Arguments of the Tombs of the Unknown,” 452. Blair et al., note, "Many of the other participant nations, empires, and/or former client states of empires would create such memorials in the interwar years, including Austria, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Hungary, India, Poland, Romania, and Serbia. Australia and Canada added their offerings in 1993 and 2000, respectively, and the most recent World War I Tomb of the Unknown was unveiled in New Zealand in 2004."

18 Capdevila and Voldman, *War Dead*, 23.


22 Philip Yannella, *The Other Carl Sandburg* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), 54.


26 Yannella, The Other Carl Sandburg, 67.

27 Robert W. Tucker, Woodrow Wilson and the Great War: Reconsidering America’s Neutrality, 1914-1917 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 188. The declaration of unrestricted warfare meant the Germans could sink all ships without warning, enemy or neutral. This marked a reverse from their position in May 1916.


30 Piehler, Remembering War the American Way, 92.


40 Lippmann, Popular Opinion, 11.

41 Lippmann, Popular Opinion, 236.

42 Lippmann, Popular Opinion, 228.


49 Tietge, Flash Effects, ix.


52 Tietge, *Flash Effect*, 47.


63 Brummett, “Perfection and the Bomb,” 90.


65 Brummett, “Perfection and the Bomb,” 90.


Preble notes that Kennedy and Alsop were acquainted with each other, living in the same part of Georgetown and seeing each other at social functions. He notes that Alsop saw Kennedy as a rising political star and was more than willing to supply Kennedy with necessary information for his ensuing political and rhetorical battles. Kennedy delivered a speech on August 14 on the subject of the missile gap and his ideas for measures to enhance U.S. security.


James N. Giglio, *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2006). Giglio notes, “But whereas Nixon was obligated to defend the Eisenhower record, Kennedy, buttressed by a liberal Democratic platform, exploited its shortcomings, including the president’s failure to keep pace with the Soviet Union in education, technology, and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs),” 17-18.


Colignon and Covaleski, 146.

Weber, Economy and Society, 111.

Susan Herbst, Numbered Voices, 16.

Weber, Economy and Society, 975.

Weber, Economy and Society, 988.


Errol Morris, The Fog of War (Sony Picture Classics, 2004).

McNamara, 14-15. After only seven weeks as Ford Motor Co. president, Bobby Kennedy contacted McNamara and he met with Sargent Shriver who initially offered McNamara the secretary of treasury. Flying to Washington to meet with the president, McNamara turned down the treasury appointment, but was counter-offered the defense secretary position. Though
McNamara claimed he was not qualified, Kennedy responded that there were no schools for defense secretaries, or for presidents.


92 Michele Chwastiak, “Taming the Untamable: Planning, Programming and Budgeting and the Normalization of War,” Accounting, Organizations and Society 26, no. 6 (2001), 501.


96 Morris, The Fog of War.


99 Turse, Kill Anything that Moves, 105. In response to the Easter Offensive launched by the North Vietnamese, Nixon started a new bombing campaign that did target Hanoi and Haiphong.

100 Turse, Kill Anything that Moves, 42.

107


103 Qtd in Turse, Kill Anything that Moves, 44. Turse notes that failure to achieve the body count would affect the comfort level of the tour, leaving those who fell short with fewer amenities or less support in the form of airlifts, meaning the troops would face “long, hot, dangerous hikes through treacherous terrain instead of helicopter rides to or from the base.”

104 Turse, Kill Anything that Moves, 46.


106 McNamara, In Retrospect, 238.

107 The eleven life lessons that serve as chapters for the documentary are: 1) Empathize with your enemy; 2) Rationality will not save us; 3) There's something beyond one's self; 4) Maximize efficiency; 5) Proportionality should be a guideline for war; 6) Get the data; 7) Belief and seeing are both often wrong; 8) Be prepared to reexamine your reasoning; 9) In order to do evil, you have to engage in evil; 10) Never say never; 11) You can’t change human nature. The life lessons were selected by Morris in response the to 20 hours of conversation with McNamara, but many are near quotes from McNamara.


118 Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol 1*, 140.
Chapter 3

Commemoration and Control in the War on Terror: The Bush and Obama Administration’s Use of Numbers

Don't forget what two plus two equals.
Don't let them upgrade your math, no matter what they have as proof of evil.
-Sage Francis, “Hey Bobby”

Addressing the Joint Session of the 107th Congress on September 20, 2001, President Bush declared that the United States’ War on Terror was only beginning. The War on Terror (WOT), or War on Terrorism, became the new epoch that defined American Foreign policy in the first decades of the 21st century. Later in his presidency, Bush narrated a link between the Cold War and the War on Terror that helped to describe the heightened state of activity that the WOT would require. “After the shipwreck of Communism,” the president declared during his Second Inaugural, “came years of relative quiet, years of repose, years of sabbatical—and then came a day of fire.”¹ Bush’s story relayed the importance that the United States remaining active in pursuit of its interest by defending itself against its large, looming enemy. It was an argument for the need to address existential threats that the Bush administration claimed were ignored for too long, though ignoring his own administration’s ignoring of early intelligence.² Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier argue that his use of sabbatical indicates that as a matter of history, these years between the fall of the Berlin Wall and 9/11 could be forgotten and offer no importance. “Just as history did not end on 11/9,” they write, “it did not begin on 9/11.”³ Instead of washing over the intervening years, rhetorical scholars have looked at the similarities and differences between the two time periods in search of an answer to the question “Is the War on Terror a completely different kind of war?” The debate revolves around the differences and similarities with the type of enemy faced, and the means through which one engages that enemy.
The first area of inquiry is in the naming of the enemy, and examining the effects that such naming can have on deliberation. In his discussion of enmyship, Jeremy Engels notes that the first step in war rhetoric is naming and defining the enemy. Next, communication with the enemy is made to seem impossible or is categorically eliminated. Finally, with communication no longer an option, the situation is escalated to the level of crisis, as “rhetors deploy the discourses of fear, paranoia, and anxiety to focus their audience’s thoughts on how best to defend themselves and their families from the enemy, and how best to exact hurt on the enemy if the chance arises.”

The process of naming is old, even as the enemy changes. Engels developed the concept of Enemyship when discussing the post-Revolutionary period, and it is a process found in almost every war. Enemyship restrains civic deliberation and social activism by making the danger overwhelming so that one must fight or flee. Robert Ivie parallels the enmyship discussion with his discussion of the enemy described as savage. He notes that the enemy as savage predates the United States, but that the process is “intimately linked” the defense of democracy. In supporting the efforts in Korea, and similar justifications eventually for Vietnam, Ivie argues that the United States used a depiction of a contrast between fight and freedom, framing the battle between “us” and “it.” The large, looming and faceless enemy of the Soviet Union resembles the threat of the dispersed al Qaeda, especially when the Bush administration framed the only choices in the war as either being “with us or against us.” In other words, war rhetoric carefully frames the choices to try and unify the audience toward the action desired by the orator.

Rhetorical critics concerned with effects of enmyship in the War on Terror have focused on how the Bush and Obama administration’s war rhetoric constrained the possibilities for civic deliberation and, especially, mobilization against the war effort. Ivie argues that there are potential dehumanizing effects of the Bush administration’s rhetoric while it promoted to the War on Terror, and he finds that the rhetoric moved toward producing a republic of fear. The effects of the label “Axis of Evil” reveals the undemocratic portrayal of an Other as an enemy, as evil
incarnate, “hyperinflates narrow-minded patriotism,” which in turn “dampens the democratic spirit and thus the marketplace of ideas” to create an “oppressive environment of fear and intimidation.” Stephen Hartnett and Laura Stengrim uncover similar effects of the Bush Doctrine of pre-emptive strikes. The authors state that the Bush Doctrine was an “anti-deliberative discourse strategy,” and included a “broad set of prescriptions for globalization-through-benevolent-empire.” The focus on empire emerges as Hartnett and Stengrim state that the only way to understand war was by examining how “globalization, empire and their accompanying rhetorical justifications have produced contexts ripe for violence.” The rhetorical analysis in this chapter further explores the “contexts ripe for violence,” but examines how the ways in which numbers are used, and sometimes obstructed, can mask the divide between our justifications for war and the aftermath of such efforts.

Critics have identified similarities and difference between the War on Terror and previous wars. In the War on Terror, the nature of that enemy has changed, and thus we must examine the ways the shifting nature of the enemy has lead to new rhetorical developments. One change in the enemy in the War on Terror is the difficulty in locating the terrorist cells in a central location. The fact that the enemy of the WOT was not a nation-state presented rhetorical problems for President Bush (and has continued to vex President Obama). Bush managed this problem rhetorically, Engels argues, by conflating the terrorist operating beyond borders with the nation-states who harbor them—hence setting in motion the process of flattening the potential enemy that can be stretched to perpetuate an endless war against terror. In his “Floating Bombs” essay, Engels argues that this conflation was necessary in order to root the terrorists in space/territory and hence to link the mechanics of the new war with old wars against other nations. Engels’ examination of the *National Security Strategy of the United States* (NSSUS) finds that the United States had deliberately confused the terms piracy and terrorism, and this move conflated state power and economic power into the force of empire. The Bush and
Obama administration argued that the dispersed, nationless enemy of the War on Terror necessitated a shift in how the war was fought. Notwithstanding the superior firepower, technology, and manpower of the coalition forces, al Qaeda and the Taliban have used their knowledge of remote areas near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and more modest weaponry, such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs), to stymie a quick victory in Afghanistan. As the region is not conducive to tank movements and fighter jets have a limited effect on surveillance, drones represent technologically adapted to fighting the new asymmetrical form of war. The developing drone technology has raised questions regarding the efficacy and moral nature of who is designated a target and how they are defined. The new remote technology, and the distance—both physical and emotional—with which they can operate, is offered as the best tactic to win the war while saving American lives. The move tacitly places the lives of the American solider as a higher priority than the potential innocents killed by drones.

The questions emerging from the shifting enemy and how we define them also manifests a shift in how biopower is functioning in the War on Terror. While Foucault’s initial conception biopower focused on the population that facilitated the growth of the state, as seen in the creation of the National Cemetery System, Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* brings the biopower debate to the present day. Following a line of argument from Foucault’s discussion of biopolitics, Agamben contends that the modern state has begun placing biological life at the center of its calculation. Agamben seeks to update Foucault’s claim that biopolitics is a recent growth of the modern state by claiming that the life of *homo sacer* has been fundamental in democratic life. One of the main areas of focus then is the “hidden point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power.” To understand this intersection, we must keep in mind the original separation of the work life in Greek, and how some, like Aristotle, appeared to favor the good life over the bare life. Agamben notes that, where we see at first an opposition between *zen* and *eu zen*, at the same time we see “an implication of the first in the second, of bare life in
politically qualified life.” Since much of our understanding of democracy originates from the Greeks, Agamben says that Western politics “first constitutes itself through an exclusion (which is simultaneously an inclusion) of bare life.” The concept of an inclusive exclusion, seen in bare life being a part of the political life, though it is cast aside as an inferior model, factors into Agamben’s more direct discussion of homo sacer.

For Agamben, the notion of sacred life has worked its way into our understandings of sovereignty, and it will show itself to be at the center of political power and the mysterious ways in which it operates. In the modern democratic state, man presents himself no longer as an object of political power, but a subject to it. More terrifying for Agamben has been the slow convergence of democracy and totalitarianism, as seen in the perpetuation of the “state of exception.” The state of exception pulls the bare life, once cast aside, out of the public/political realm, and places it back in the square of the state’s concerns. As the state of exception becomes the rule, once again favoring Agamben’s interplay of polar opposites, there is an increase in uncertainty regarding who is safe and what it means to be safe. The concept of homo sacer can be used to investigate the moral implications of counting casualties of war, particularly because of the ambiguous nature of the concept and issues of sovereignty. This new focus of biopower also allows a new vantage point from which to question and criticize the operating of the drone war that escalated during the Obama administration. For the Obama administration, the discussion of the value of human life hinges frequently on the distinction between a verified, targeted militant and innocent civilian casualties, though the case becomes more complicated when the question of American drone victims is broached. The process of questioning or pushing back, particularly when the criteria for deciding who is a verified militant and who is just in the wrong place at the wrong time, is increasingly hidden from the public in the continued state of exception. Lacking the evidence and access to such criteria, as well as the increased deference to the state in times of war, restrains deliberation. Even in the times where people do contest, they have their motives
questioned instead of being engaged on the case at hand, further limiting access to deliberative space.

This chapter takes up Engels and Saas’ call for rhetorical critics to “describe and ultimately demystify the discourses justifying war,” and it aims to show how both the Bush and Obama administrations’ lack of numerical rhetorics facilitated the support of the war, and masked the true costs that will be felt by generations to come.\textsuperscript{15} This chapter’s analysis of the Bush and Obama administrations’ use of numbers will contribute to the extensive body of work that has examined the War on Terror in its various forms.\textsuperscript{16} To do so, I focus first on President Bush’s use of numbers during the 2002 State of the Union Address, focusing on the mundane and vague use of numbers used to argue for a broader war. Next, I offer an apparatus for how the public can judge the use of numerical rhetorics that focuses on three criteria: accuracy, transparency, and magnitude. Finally, I examine President Obama’s use of numbers in the War on Terror, which largely transitions from a motive of commemoration to a motive of control. I argue that the expansion of the drone program, and criticism of it, required a different rhetorical response from that of President Bush. The Obama administration’s particular use of numbers narrowed the realm of public deliberation and it attempted set the state up as the sole arbiter of accurate numbers used during war.

During the War on Terror both commemorative and control rhetorics have served to hinder democratic deliberation by eliminating the grounds that one could stand on to challenge the state. One feature of these rhetorics is that of unenumeration, or the refusal to produce a number where one is required for full civic consideration of a decision to go to war. Unenumeration can be masked in commemorative rhetorics, as a rhetoric seeks to close off certain areas of inquiry by promoting specific common values and memories that one needs to quietly acquiesce to the march of war. A brief commemorative reminder can close off a moment as contestable, directing an audience not to question what U.S. actions could have sparked a
terrorist response, but instead keep them focused through a narrated path to retaliation. The deployment of a number, in turn, attempts to establish the state as the sole arbiter of the true, trustworthy number, and thus can reflect a control motive. A specific number also has the ability shift the burden of proof to critics to produce a counter number that will be as definite and have the ability to reach as large of a public as the state. Furthermore, a deployment of a specific number on the part of the state has the potential to shape the realities of the things we are counting, changing how we view the things we are counting, as well as those left uncounted.

President Bush’s Expansion of the War on Terror

As the start of Iraq War drew nearer, President Bush relied more readily on the motive of commemoration almost constantly during the conflict to drive the war and control. The case for Iraq was first made publicly in the 2002 State of the Union address, and the speech featured a defining characteristic of vague numerical rhetorics that stymy deliberation. The broad and undefined numerical rhetorics Bush used in this speech typify the vague numerical rhetorics used to push a case for a broad war that was rarely specific. The 2002 State of the Union is most remembered as the first major speech to identify the "Axis of Evil," comprised of North Korea, Iran, and Iraq. The president blended some deliberative discourse in the State of the Union, though it remained dominated by epideictic rhetoric. As Bush began to make the case for an expanded War on Terror that would eventually include the invasion of Iraq, the argument was vaguely deliberative. Bush offered two criteria for potential targets: the existence of terrorist training and planning camps, and “terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world.” Overwhelming the deliberative in the speech was Bush’s use of epideictic. Standing in for the country, as he did shortly after September 11, 2001, Bush recalled the trauma of the attacks and the efforts to
rebuild and make the country stronger. With regards to the WoT, Bush referred to the attacks that occurred "four short months" again, and set out to describe the efforts being made in the name of revenge. In this speech, Bush rarely moved two paragraphs without an allusion to September 11 and its impact.

Not so much a detailed plan as an update on the progress of the war, Bush presented a frightening case of what lies ahead. In the intervening months, the military reportedly uncovered blueprints for nuclear sites in the US. Building off the case of fear, Bush noted that "hundreds of terrorists have been arrested. Yet, tens of thousands of trained terrorists are still at large." Tens of thousands of men were trained in the terrorist camps in Afghanistan, and many remain at large. The dramatic use of tens of thousands of numbers in conjunction with the fear appeal facilitates the control motive that is couched closely with the commemorative motive. The revealing of arrested terrorist is an example of metrics, as it can be used to evaluate the progress of the war. However, in this case, it is an not a number which is to be celebrated for too long, for Bush indicated that there are upwards of ten or a hundred times as many terrorists still at large. When "thousands of dangerous killers" remain on the loose, deliberation or questioning of the ends of the war is curtailed, as it is difficult to argue against wanting to capture and prevent these "thousands" from doing any further damage around the world, and especially in the US. Bush caps off their description with the "ticking time bomb" moniker, which Stahl notes is used to limit democratic discussion. Resulting from the ticking time bomb usage, democratic deliberation is being held hostage in the name of capturing or killing those who are being charged with hijacking and other terrorist plots.

One of the most difficult elements of perpetuating the War on Terror for administrations has been the process of maintaining support without the clearly defined end or metric for success. Dessert Storm featured an explicit end. George H.W. Bush enumerated the “four simple principles” that guided US policy in the war. President Bush said the four goals included the
complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the restoration of Kuwait’s legitimate government, the security and stability of the Persian Gulf, and the protection of American citizens abroad. In contrast, the unenumerated rhetoric of the War on Terror also facilitates the perpetuation of the infinite war in the obfuscation of the numbers required to determine the success or value of the war. Part of the quagmire involves a drain on economic resources if we do not see the value in the end. Preempting this, the Bush Administration kept the full costs of the war hidden from the public by keeping it separate from the annual budget, thus delaying the difficult decisions regarding how to pay for the two-front venture. Bush’s vague numbers became part of the new war rhetoric that Engels and Saas describe, particularly as the argument for an expanded war in Iraq was replaced with a status update on the country’s progress battling terrorists. The vague numerical rhetorics that defined much of Bush’s discourse prevented others from countering the claims made, because there was barely anything to push back against. In order to address this and to better understand how numerical rhetorics function effectively and ethically, we need a method of judging numerical rhetorics.

Criteria for Judging the Use of Numerical Rhetorics

What are the available means of judgment when it comes to evaluating numerical rhetoric? In order to judge the use of numbers, we first must create an apparatus for how to evaluate this rhetoric. The categorization of motives for numerical rhetorics, such as control and commemoration, begins to define the fields and give us insight to reasons why certain numbers were used, but they do not provide the criteria for judgment. In addition to the analysis of motive, three different yet interconnected criteria can judge numerical rhetorics: accuracy, transparency, and magnitude. These three criteria may also be thought of as parts of another three-step hierarchy: product, process, and politics. Accuracy can be like with product when we think of
accuracy of the number-as-thing. Transparency can be linked with process, as we are concerned with the method and publicity of the thing-making process. Finally magnitude can be linked with politics, as we are indicating the importance of selection and emphasis, or the choice of that which compels attention or action.

The criterion of **accuracy** allows the audience to consider the how important the rhetor believes the number to be. Accuracy could mean the difference between providing a specific number or providing a rounded total. Hidden within the choice to round, compare, or be exact can suggest further motives or biases, insofar as the appearance of precision does not actually guarantee precisions. If a number is exact, it can show that effort was taken to carefully measure it, and the certainty can grant the speaker greater ethos. As easily as a specific number can be given, that number may not necessarily be the most accurate one available. Yet the push toward an accurate number is a gesture towards deliberation. As Nikolas Rose writes of democratic numbers, the production of an official number opens the government up to a counter number. Should the Republican administration put forth a number that represents the projected budget deficit in the war, Democrats or advocacy groups are then able to push against that number, testing it for accuracy and potentially offering their own counter number. The deployment of a number can suggest that careful thought and consideration when into attaining the most accurate measurement. Yet, in order to prove this, we need to see the work; we need transparency.

Another element of accuracy deals with the realm of specificity. As was noted in chapter 1, the use of rounded figures in place of more specific ones can give away potential biases or express less empathy. Catherine Rubincam writes that “approximating” expressions, which “are those that indicate some unspecified degree of uncertainty and/or impression felt by the writer or speaker concerning the number mentioned,” can clearly express one’s interests or sympathies. As Thucydides reported more Athenian casualties with greater frequency and accuracy than the Peloponnesians, it placed greater import on the sacrifice of Athens and her allies, while
diminishing the importance of the Peloponnesian side. In his October 2002 speech in Cincinnati, Bush continued to make the case for war in Iraq. In making his case by claiming that Iraq harbored terrorists, Bush noted the terrorist Abu Nidal, whose terrorist organization "carried out more than 90 terrorist attacks in 20 countries that killed or injured nearly 900 people, including 12 Americans." Here, the Americans are the only ones given a precise count. The prioritizing of this specificity deemphasizes the impact of the other numbers included. The choice to leave the non-American casualties vague while giving a specific count for American deaths directs the focus to one side of the comparison. It is a matter of emphasis, as the 12 takes a sharper edge, and the background, or here the other dead, is blurry. In this instance, such a move is rhetorically understandable and increases the chance at being effective, as Bush sought to demonstrate to a domestic audience that the U.S. had a stake in terrorist actions even if they did not continue to dominate the news. That is, this deployment of numerical rhetorics could be understandable in a rhetorical sense, but it can be ethically objectionable at the same time.

The accuracy criterion can thus also be thought of as the product of evolution and rhetorical choice. This choice is the entry point to criticism, or at the very least, can begin to open a deliberative space. One of the central aspects of the state of exception, cultivated by enemyship, is that the administration can argue that it is dangerous to show citizens the work. Hence, the state of exceptions works against accuracy by blocking transparency. When one refuses to numerate, to name, to be specific, it begins to block off or limit access to deliberation. Just as it is difficult to prove a negative (Saddam did not destroy his weapons, vs. here are the 45 missiles Saddam has), it is difficult for a citizen to challenge the story of the state when there is no starting point. The number-as-product becomes the first level at which a citizen can enter into a debate. In order to prove the accuracy, we need to see the work.

A second criterion for the judgment of numerical rhetorics is transparency. At its core, this transparency is the practice of openness about the process behind the product—publicizing
the means by which the number is determined. Yet as one goes deeper into the number, one can raise additional questions regarding the process. Similar to the problems faced with accuracy, what can be hidden when the origins of a number are left obscured? A moral and ethical quandary can quickly be created when the formation of a number is left unknown. Particularly in the case of war, where a number could represent the lives of innocent civilians killed or soldiers put in harm’s way, transparent attribution should be of vital importance.

Following Secretary of State Colin Powell’s presentation at the United Nations on February 5, 2003, Bush echoed his many of Powell’s claims the following day. In this speech, Bush repeated the three-part indictment against Saddam Hussein: the existence of Iraq's chemical weapons program, its efforts to hide the program, and Iraq's connections to terrorist groups. Bush begins his argument premised under the idea that United States' great intelligence networks had been able to uncover this. Of course, in hindsight it is easier to see the false nature of these claims, but they carried with them the weight of the US government, military, and intelligence behind them. Bush then deployed vague and unspecific numbers, such as the "close to 30" sites for producing chemical weapons within Iraq. More specific numbers emerged in the next paragraph as Bush noted the seven mobile chemical weapons labs he claimed Saddam had. The results of these facilities arrives in the form of the "thousands of bombs and shells capable of delivering chemical weapons," that Bush claimed Iraq had never accounted for. Bush repeated these numbers in his Saturday February 8, 2003 radio address, once again remaining vague regarding the number of weapons Saddam has or should have destroyed in the 12 years after he said he would. Claims about the number of weapons Iraq was supposed to have yet could not be found were addressed by former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter, who said inspectors achieved 90-95 percent level of verified disarmament between 1994-1998.25

There are also moral aspects to a numerical rhetoric’s transparency. The United States government has recently maintained an accurate count of military service members that have
been killed around the world, but they have been less than forthright with the numbers of civilians killed in military combat around the world. In the lead up to the Iraq war, Mark Garlasco, in his role as chief of high-level targeting for the Joint Chiefs, attempted to accurately predict how many civilians would be killed with each military strike. As Garlasco told This American Life producer Alex Blumberg, the United States military took every precaution it could to limit civilian casualties. However, the military planning commissions were not naïve enough to believe all casualties would be eliminated with geometry. It was Garlasco’s job to spend his 18-hour days selecting targets and predicting the civilian death toll. Civilian casualties were a primary concern for the planning team and weapons engineers. The predicted number of civilian deaths determined how quickly a strike could be deployed; a missile launch hinged on a “magic number.” In this instance of the Iraqi war, that magic number was thirty. Garlasco explained, “And for any target, where it was anticipated that thirty civilians or more would be killed, it required the signature of either the president or secretary of defense.” Garlasco had no idea about how the 30:1 ratio was determined. The decision and the definitional power rested in the hands of the U.S. military leadership, even if the bureaucratic haze prevents an identification of the 30:1 ratio inventor. The lack of transparency in who created this specific number opens up moral questions: how many civilian casualties are endurable for one targeted strike? Does this ratio change depending upon the value of the target? What responsibility and moral burden must the operators and planners bear by utilizing this number that begins to abstract out the potential costs of war?

Transparency can thus be thought of as the process, that which gets us to a number-as-product. Intimately related the accuracy of the number, the process of deriving a number offers an entry point to criticism. Garlasco’s example is an example of a false kind of transparency, or an actual opacity and its moral consequences. Since there were no reasons publicly given for the 30:1 mathematical procedure, it could prevent an entry point to criticism, and eventual resolution.
The third criterion for judging numerical rhetorics is that of magnitude. Translated from the Greek *megethos*, magnitude was important for Aristotle, because it was a notion “morphologically and conceptually tied to important Aristotelian themes like the more and the less, the big and small, and the virtues of magnificence (*megaloprepeia*) and greatness of psychē (*megalopsychiā*).” 29 *Megethos* provides for a comparative seeing, a potential inventional resource for a rhetor. In his discussion of how rhetoric is the art of making this matter, Thomas Farrell writes the “single most frequently recurring commonplace is that of quantity, degree, largess, magnitude.” 30 When discussing tragedy in chapter 7 of the *Poetics*, Aristotle touches upon the importance of magnitude. Aristotle writes that a beautiful object, "whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude: for beauty depends on magnitude and order." In this section, Aristotle contends that one of vast size cannot be beautiful, for "the eye cannot take it all in at once, the unity and sense of the whole is lost for the spectator, as, for instance, if there were one in a thousand mile long." The balance for the rhetor, though in this case Aristotle speaks of the storyteller, is to find a balance in how to compose an object, bringing it within the frame of reference for the audience. In *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides frequently compared the death tolls of the Athenians and Peloponnesians, but favored the Athenians with more accurate numbers. This move tacitly showed his allegiances and placed greater importance on Athens’ suffering. When it comes to numerical rhetorics, the criterion of magnitude is required to make numbers compelling for the audience.

Investment in a war, whether it is in trillions of dollars that will have to be paid off for generations to come, or thousands of soldiers who will give their lives for the effort, has long been a component of making the decision whether or not to engage in a war. In making his case against Iraq during his November 2002 speech in Cincinnati, when Bush deployed numbers referencing how many people Hussein had killed, he simultaneously made a reference to the
victims of September 11th. Every number needed a reference point back to the number of Americans that had been killed. Hussein was said to have killed at least 20,000 people with chemical weapons, to which Bush added, this was "more than six times the number of people who died in the attacks of September the 11th." The nearly three thousand people killed on September 11th became a touchstone for how Americans could measure other atrocities, as that number had been engrained in post-9/11 discourse. A number that would have remained abstract and distant—that of 20,000 non-Americans—could be brought into perspective. Though abstract and rounded, this number allowed a transference of the emotions built into the 9/11 death toll to the innocent victims of Saddam’s chemical weapon use. The comparative nature of Bush’s numbers also exhibited a mimetic link that would tie 9/11 with Iraq and Saddam Hussein. This false link had quite a lot of traction in public opinion, leading to increased support for invading Iraq.\(^3\)

Magnitude can have an effect of shutting down deliberation, or, carefully wielded, it can draw more people into the deliberative process. Insofar as we are limited in the number or scope of things that we can imagine at any one time, we may not have the mental inventory to connect or frame a number. For example, it is difficult to picture a trillion dollars and so a citizen may become content with the abstract representation of that number. In other words, at a certain point numbers begin to take on a quality of pure imagination that can sometimes frustrate attempts to understand the magnitude of the situation. It should go without saying that the scale is always shifting, and it is dependent upon the topic, situation, and one’s experience. While the American public may have a difficult time comprehending the $1 trillion check for the wars, they could understand it if it is compared to new schools being built, fire and policemen being hired, or the costs of education, social safety net programs, and transpiration combined. In other words, when we can think of the rhetorical impact that magnitude can have, it can potentially increase
democratic participation by appealing and relating figures to the public, or it can purposefully
close off that discussion by eliminating the wider perspective.

**Numbers in the Age of Drones**

The evolving nature of the American War on Terror, including the steady increase in
drone technologies, warrants an examination in terms of governmentality. The new nature of the
WOT, in particular the nature of the enemy and how they are defined, allows for, or even
requires, new norms of governmentality. Developed to its greatest extent by Michel Foucault,
governmentality focuses its examination on how the state understands its "task of ruling
politically." This task requires them "to act upon the details of the conduct of the individuals and
populations who were their subjects, individually and collectively, in order to increase their good
order, their security, their tranquility, their prosperity, health, and happiness." The War on
Terror focuses the efforts of the government to justify their actions and interventions in foreign
countries in the name of defending the American people from terrorist attacks. In this regard, the
process of enemyship remains constant. What is then new in the War on Terror is the enemy,
amorphous and stateless. With this, we also see the lengths that the government went through to
change the definition of the enemy and the ways they report the progress of the war. Particularly
with the drone war, the Obama administration faced new challenges in how and when they
needed to reveal their justifications for its expansion, including the very real possibility that
Americans could be killed without a trial. Further, President Obama was then required to
determine who was worthy of being killed and attempted to place the burden of that choice on
himself, hidden from larger oversight and transparency.

The 2001 Authorization of Military Force (AUMF) broadly defines the scope of the
president's ability to engage targets around the world. My analysis begins with a the array of
technologies used by the government to assess the facilitation of the ongoing wars, including the developments of drone technologies, the justifications for their use, and the informational advantage the state seeks to maintain. A study in the technologies of governmentality also must access the ways in which the state seeks to justify the a particular regime of truth that is concerned with the "conduct of conduct, ways of speaking truth, person authorized to speak truths, ways of enacting truths and the costs of so doing." Numerical justifications enter to equation at all levels of the debate, in public and behind classified stamps. In the discussion of the drone war, there is a marked return of numerical rhetorics. First, the Obama Administration makes the case that the state is once again the sole arbiter of the true numbers, as seen in the revelation of the four Americans killed in drone strikes. The specificity included in this revelation marks a prioritization of the motive of control in Obama’s numerical rhetorics. Another indication of the control motive is Obama’s use of unenumerated rhetorics, or strategic decisions not to numerate or publicly reveal important numbers that would help citizens evaluate the progress and ethicality of the war. Due to the unenumerated rhetorics of the Bush and Obama administration, antiwar groups and other non-governmental organizations began to deploy numbers that filled the gap left by the government. On other words, the government had lost its monopoly on numbers during the war on terror, and its rhetorics must try to reassert it.

The drone program began in secrecy during the Bush administration, and without negative press the Obama administration was not required to publicly defend or support its implementation. Evident from its nature, drone warfare reasserts the asymmetrical advantage in favor of those in possession of the technology. An additional benefit that is frequently marshaled for the drones is the benefit gained by no putting US soldiers directly in harm’s way. The ability to engage an enemy from afar generates far fewer casualties for the US and coalition soldiers. As such, this point appeared to successfully drive support from the American public. A Pew Research poll in 2012 showed that 62% of the American public was supportive of the use of
unmanned aerial vehicles to carry out the mission of eradicating terror. As reports of the program began to circulate, the administration was called upon to make a case for the drone program. Seizing on this exigency, the administration forwarded a rhetoric of control that deployed numerical rhetorics to acknowledge the decisions made in the pursuit of a drone war.

**Numerical Rhetorics and the Unenumerated**

The acquiescent rhetoric in the ends-less war is visible in the unenumerated rhetorics of the Bush and Obama administration. As discussed below, the facilitation of the drone program exemplifies the administrations’ efforts to shield the public from the damage done in their name. In June 2011, Obama’s then-counterterrorism advisor and now head of the CIA, John Brennan, claimed that in the previous year there had not been a single collateral death caused by the use of drones. Masking a more realistic number that anti-war groups would soon produce, Brennan’s statement produced reassurance that this pesky war that is draining tens of millions of dollars daily is nothing that needs to occupy the American people’s minds, especially if only the designated enemies are being killed.

As a type of obfuscating rhetoric, unenumeration interacts with the *occulatio* that Conley and Saas describe as apparent in President Bush’s rhetoric. Conley and Saas describe *occulatio* as a rhetoric that produces mystification, and in turn it produces a citizenry “confounded by the haunting paradox of torture practiced in the name of democracy and freedom.” They note that Obama’s campaign promised to change the extremes of the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld years, particularly in the area regarding torture, yet it is clear that with Obama’s extension of the drone program there is still a tension between democracy, freedom, and the rights that a suspected terrorist has under the Obama administration. In this realm, the Obama administration has remained silent upon the number of suspected terrorists they have killed, and they have refused to
comment on the number of civilians killed in drone attacks. Unenumeration is a process in which the administration refuses to open itself up to a counter number, a potential challenge to their declared goal or victory. The result is a failed attempt at obscuring the visible and the countable, as is the case of the civilian casualties of the war or drone strikes. Constantly refusing to engage the reality of the situation does not strengthen the administration’s case that the war is going according to plan. The lack of numbers facilitates the endless war against the amorphous, ill-defined, and regenerating enemy.

The unenumerated pursuit of war is the result of a new war rhetoric that seeks acquiescence as much as it is the result of learning from past mistakes that opened the administration to criticism. The lessons grew from Vietnam, where the administration's quantitative military plan opened itself up to a critique by anti-war forces, especially as the war dragged on and the death tolls on both sides of the battle become more prominent. The recent Iraq war represents a grander scale than military engagements of the previous 40 years. Actions in Grenada, Panama, and even the first Gulf War were intentionally limited in their size and scope in order to minimize casualties. The goal was to overcome the Vietnam problem/syndrome, which disrupted the myth of American Exceptionalism, particularly in war. America should not get bogged down in another “quagmire,” or a situation where the country is mired in stalemate. Stahl denotes two problems with quagmires for the administration. First, in terms of military or imperial policy, a quagmire "represents an economic sinkhole, a waste of martial resources, and a strategic failure." Second, a quagmire "affords time for dissent" as the battle drags on without decisive victory in sight.37 As the war in Afghanistan enters its twelfth year, and Iraq its 10th, we have certainly reached the calendar requirements for a quagmire, but the popular uproar hasn't been overwhelming. This chapter will explore the strategies used by the Bush and Obama administrations to keep numbers hidden from the American people, aiding in the perpetuation of the War on Terror.
The Bush and Obama administrations’ unenumerated rhetoric marks a shift away from the state showcasing its power and resources through the deployment of numbers. The government has a vested interest and long history of keeping accurate records and detailed sets of numbers. This is especially true in terms of biopolitical power, the Malthusian power of managing populations. In his analysis of political power, especially the forms of biopolitics that are enabled by liberalism, Nikolas Rose notes that there are four important types of political numbers. First, he claims “numbers determine who holds power, and whose claim to power is justified.” Numbers are vital to democratic politics. For instance, the numbers rolling in after an election can increase the legitimacy of the victors (e.g., ruling with a mandate), or it can impinge the freedom to act (e.g., losing the popular vote, but winning the Electoral College). The second types of numbers “operate as diagnostic instruments within liberal reason.” Rose mentions political polling and the promise of uniting private opinion with popular representatives. Thirdly, numbers “make modern modes of government possible and judgeable.” Stats, charts and graphs aid in the skeptical vigilance of the populace checking the government. Finally, numbers are said to be “crucial techniques for modern government,” including counts of populations, births and deaths, and tax returns. The government has an interest, especially pertaining to the third set, of collecting statistics on war dead because the numbers would aid in monitoring the progress or plans of the war. Inherent in this fascination with numbers is the desire to control their usage. As quickly as the government is able to produce a number, it opens itself to a counter number. Our political lives, thus, have become a means of integrating numbers into our decisions and beliefs. Rose notes that while numbers appear to shape our political realities as we digest statistics, numbers also have the ability to “depoliticize whole areas of political judgment.” However, by steering clear of specific number sets, particularly those of civilian deaths in the War on Terror, the government opens the area for civic criticism.
Particularly in the wake of Vietnam, and the negative press received in relation to body counts, the administration has less forthcoming with numbers of civilian deaths and changed the media’s relations to the battlefield. During the first Gulf War the government created a reporter pool system to control access to the war. The embedded reporter, with the feeling of instant access, furthered the administration’s use of “temporal rhetorics” that helped “to shape a public environment hostile to deliberative possibilities.” On March 18, 2002, General Tommy Franks uttered perhaps the most damning quote regarding the administration’s stance on counting civilian casualties, one that received wide circulation and served as a testament to this fact that the U.S. is not forthcoming with civilian casualties. Prompted with a question in regards to civilian deaths in relation to military progress in Afghanistan, Franks responded curtly, “You know we don’t do body counts.” Echoing these sentiments, Air Force Brigadier General John Rosa, deputy director for current operations at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, "We're not counting bodies from up here." As chilling as these quotes form high ranking military officials appears, they testify to the idea that whether casualties recorded, let alone reported, represents a value judgment. The quote furthers the unenumerated rhetoric of the Bush administration, signaling the state’s attempt to exercise power not through the deployment of a specific number, but by withholding an official number. The unenumerated rhetoric, particularly this withholding gesture, can be seen in the development of military drones through the War on Terror.

The discussion of enumerated and unenumerated rhetorics brings us back to the question of when is it that numbers should be provided to the public, and when is it okay for them to be withheld. Similar to the motivations behind the criteria for judging numerical rhetorics, I believe that if a number is crucial to the public’s ability to analyze the progress of a war being carried out in their name, then every effort should be made to provide that figure. This includes an accurate count of civilian casualties in the war. Even with the lessons learned from Vietnam, one the government has forgotten is that war fought in the name of the people should seek the approval of
the people. People know that war brings death and destruction, and the devastation will not be limited only to combatants. If a case for war is strong enough that the public supports sending young women and men into harm’s way, then it will be able to be weighed against the toll of war.

Every instance that the government refuses to produce a number of civilian casualties further opens the door for charges that the government either a) is unable to argue that the ends do in fact justify the innocents lost in the process, or b) is carrying out a war without full regard for human life and full knowledge of what their actions have wrought. As the government is forthcoming and accurate with the death toll of U.S. and coalition soldiers, so, too should it be transparent with the total costs of the war, both in casualty counts and the financial impact the war will have. As Campbell and Jamieson note, the decision to go to war must always be presented by presidents as a last resort after careful deliberation. Eliminating important numbers that allow the public to analyze the progress of the war, or debate its worth in terms of civilian casualties, indicates a government that does not trust the people who they claim to represent.

While the people do not need classified information regarding how many soldiers were a part of Seal Team Six raid that killed Osama bin Laden, they do need to know how many Iraqis have been killed in a war that failed to produces the weapons of mass destruction that it was predicated upon.

The Government’s Attempt to Reassert Control Through Numerical Rhetorics

With the escalation of drone warfare, there has been substantial collateral damage, prompting discussions of who is being targeted and how many civilians have been killed.

Included in this discussion is the ability for Americans to be targeted by the US government. The debate garnered more public discussion as Obama’s former counterterrorism adviser John Brennan was selected to be the new director of the CIA, thus causing the Obama administration
to have to defend its drone policies. On May 22, 2013, just prior to a major policy speech on the American government’s use of drones in the War on Terror, Attorney General Eric Holder delivered a letter to Congress for the first time publicly acknowledging the deaths of four Americans at the hands of drones. Three of the deaths were not a surprise, as they had been widely reported when they occurred. However, Jude Kenan Mohammad’s inclusion in the list of Americans killed by US drones sparked some controversy, because it was the first any news media had heard about his death. The FBI had Mohammad on its Most Wanted list until the week of Holder’s letter, even though a drone had killed him in November 2011.

Acknowledging that these strikes took place “outside of areas of active hostilities,” the government took a step that would facilitate a change in how drone strikes were conducted. The policy guidelines that were purported to limit the use of drone strikes that occur in places that are not overt war zones was classified. Holder’s letter clearly stated that U.S. drones targeted and killed one American, Anwar Al-Alaki, in Yemen. The September 2011 strike outside an active war zone complied with the U.S. effort to curtail the activities of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), but it was also the only death the administration took credit for in the active voice. For the remaining three Americans killed in drone strikes, the government stated that they were not directly targeted. Instead, the use of the passive voice changes the category of their deaths from targets to casualties for Samir Khan, killed in the strike that targeted Anwar Al-Awlaki, Al-Alaki’s 16-year old son, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, who was killed in a strike that targeted another leader, and Jude Kenan Mohammad. Holder’s letter produced the first public justification for the targeted killing of an American at the hands of a U.S. drone strike, but the letter attempted to place it within a system in which the government takes “special care and takes into account all relevant constitutional considerations, the laws of war, and other law with respect to U.S. citizens.” The respect given to these U.S. citizens was the acknowledgement of their deaths at the hands of their own government. The rest of the U.S. citizens remained at a loss over
the meanings of this announcement, and what potential precedent the killings set in place. No
ease would emerge from Holder’s legalistic overtures.

Holder’s tone and legalistic justification mirrored his March 2012 Northwestern
University address on the legal framework for drone strikes. In the Northwestern address, Holder
listed off successful terror prosecutions as potential evidence that the administration is willing to
prosecute the war and those responsible according to the law. The listing of successful
prosecutions or prevented terror attacks is one metric the administration furnished to ease the
minds of concerned citizens and government critics. Holder removed numbers as metrics for
success, replacing them with individual cases and names. The details, including sometimes the
names of the individual arrested, can be used as a heuristic to indicate the depth and accuracy of
each case. A few notable cases include Faizal Shahzad, the attempted Times Square bomber,
Ahmed Ghailani, a “conspirator in the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, and
three individuals who plotted against John F. Kennedy Airport in 2007,” all of whom are
currently serving life sentences.47

Holder used the successful prosecutions as the first chance to buttress in his lengthy
refutation of administration critics that drone strikes were illegal, could be considered
assassinations, should not target American citizens, and did not represent due process. The
successful prosecutions also served as evidence of the successful collaboration across agencies in
the pursuit of terror suspects, a collaboration that Holder said “defines and distinguishes this
Administration’s national security efforts.”48 Rose writes that states are now resorting to
"constitutional and legal styles of truth telling, which have their own procedures for establishing
truth and their own rhetorical devices for adjudicating and certifying truth claims."49 Until 2011,
the government’s legal justifications remained classified, and infrequently a justification emerged
that pushed a moral effort behind the continued drone strikes. In Holder's speech, the evidence
shifts to the legal justifications, a realm in which the state has the ability to develop and maintain
its own ethos for an on-going mission. The technology of legalistic justification helps preserve the power and moral right to lie within the state. Thus, Holder's Northwestern address produced an ethos for the bureaucratic machine that is at work not only to keep you safe, but to also safeguard your rights. The legalistic tone is further compounded by the tactile effect that counting that Marshall McLuhan discussed. Instead of viewing numbers as mysterious, McLuhan believes that if numbers are viewed as an extension of our bodies, they become more intelligible. As the public may be lost in a legal language they do not understand, the feeling that real metrics of success thus far in the War on Terror can lower their guard with regards to the how drone attacks are justified and executed.

As quickly as Holder attempted to comfort the civil libertarian concerns, he just as swiftly dismissed the conflation of due process with judicial process, saying that the “Constitution guarantees due process, not judicial process.” The distinction can be traced back to the “specific circumstances” of each case, because the Fifth Amendment’s Due Process Clause “does not impose one-size-fits-all requirements.” For Holder and the Bush Administration, there is room for the Executive Branch to conduct and manage national security operations without oversight or authorization of the courts. But Holder claimed that there was a rigorous process in place to protect innocent life. In this instance, the American public was meant to trust the government based off the metrics presented and an allusion to transparency and oversight. The oversight mentioned was “extensive oversight reviews of section 702 [of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act] activities at lease once every sixty days, and we report to Congress on implementation and compliance twice a year.” Section 702 of the FISA allows the government to collect “foreign intelligence information concerning non-U.S. persons located outside the United States,” but it is stated that Section 702 “cannot be used to intentionally target any U.S. citizen, any other U.S. person, or anyone located within the United States.” Even before The Guardian and the Washington Post published articles questioning the veracity of such a statement
during the summer of 2013, Holder’s dismissal of judicial process for American citizens, even those in war zones, further emboldened the role the Executive plays in prosecuting the War on Terror, and doubled back on his claims regarding the efficacy civilian and military courts to handle prosecution of the terror suspects. The simplified logic is a rationalized decision that keeps the eyes on the ends while negating many criticisms of the means. The terror suspects cannot challenge their accusation from the grave, though the administration appears to believe this is plausible, as the New York Times reported in May 2012, the targets are assumed guilty “unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent.”

Holder’ March 2012 speech and May 2013 letter to Congress, along with statements of John Brennan, evade the direct concern of civilian casualties or direct our attention toward the positive effects of the administration's policies to this point. The tight control over the numbers of citizens killed, American or foreign, via drone strikes, is a manifestation of further biopolitical concerns that we saw fading into the background by the end of the Cold War. The strategic control over official numbers has long been a habit of the state. Over the last century the government has lost its monopoly on numbers. As Nikolas Rose notes, the production of an official number opens the government up to a counter number. While the administration remained nearly silent for years on the numbers of civilians killed by drones during the Obama administration, when they did make claims, a counterclaim followed quickly. In a June 2011 speech at Johns Hopkins University, John Brennan, former CIA agent, counter-terrorism advisor to President Obama, and now director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), claimed that from August 2010 through June 2011, “there hasn't been a single collateral death” caused by U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, “because of the exceptional proficiency, precision of the capabilities that we've been able to develop.” Absurd on its face that absolutely no civilians or non-targets were killed in an aerial attack, the claim opened the door for legitimate counter-claims by groups like The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, which claimed that at least 45 civilians were killed
in 10 of the 116 drone strikes that took places in that time frame. Through the overall denial of civilian casualties, the choice to reveal the killing of four American citizens by U.S. drone strikes marks an important step for the government in controlling the narrative of the War on Terror’s success.

The acknowledgement of the four Americans killed in drone strikes reasserts the state in control of numbers by declaring publicly a specific number that even exceeds previous accusations of American casualties at the hands of drones. Revealing the fourth name of Jude Kenan Mohammad asserts the control and apparent disclosure on the part of the government at the forefront of the overarching argument of "Trust us; we've got this." What does the government have in this instance? Do they have control over the targeted kills that have brought criticism at home and abroad, including the drones being used as a recruiting device for AQAP? Do they have the support of Congress in the facilitation of the program that goes beyond notifying select members when a decision to carry out a strike has been made? Finally, do they have the trust of the American public who is now aware that even as American citizens they are able to be killed without a trial, or any other standard of due process that is commonly accepted, for no other reason beyond being in the wrong place at the wrong time? The government had only one move left, which was to use numerical certainty in hopes of establishing credibility and gaining control in a moment when the power of numbers to have agency of their own threatens the state's long-standing role as holder of this official record and story. Revealing the names of the Americans killed by U.S. drone strikes was an act of governance where the state is attempting to “act upon action.”

Governing is characterized in this realm by trying to understand what mobilizes those being governed, acting upon those forces, and attempting to shape them toward desired outcomes. A public revelation of the Americans killed by drones served as the peace offering to show that the administration is first able to admit that it has done—though not apologize for it—before it gestures toward a change in its targeted killing policy. It is meant to knead the
American public into the quiet corners they are designed for, placing trust in the government to protect them.

Numbers are necessarily political. The act of counting, or publicly revealing counting that has remained previously classified, implicates the politicization of counting. In their book analyzing how numbers are politicized, Alonso and Starr note that numbers are not politicized because they are necessarily corrupt, though that is distinctly possible. Numbers are politicized because "political judgments are implicit in the choice of what to measure, how to measure it, how often to measure it, and how to present and interpret the results." The administration's release of American's killed by U.S. drones came at a time when the Obama administration purported a shift to a more transparent process of how drone strike are decided, and by whom. Hidden deep within this number remains the growing number of innocent civilians killed by drones, and the administration's refusal to produce any number, even if they fear it will be dismissed as propaganda. It took nearly four years into the Obama administration's control over the War on Terror for the first public acknowledgement of a number that shines a light on only one portion of the global battlefield, the American enemy-combatant death toll. Rose notes that another facet of politicized number is the way in which our images of political life are shaped by "the realities of our society that numerical technologies appear to disclose." In this way, numbers function as "inscription devices," as they "actually constitute the domains they appear to represent." With the control rhetoric of a specific number, the public may begin to see the drone war through the deployment of these numbers. The specificity of the four enumerated Americans constructs a façade that the state is maintaining an accurate count of all those killed by drones, and the move could instill further confidence that all means are being taken to reduce casualties. The control rhetorics in this numerical deployment features as a means of the administration attempting to take control of the drone program that has come to define its preferred method of fighting the War on Terror.
The ownership stake by the administration is interesting, not only for the public image, but for understanding how the Obama administration uses the ownership stake to solidify control of the war narrative. Much of this ownership began when the administration prepared to name Obama's former counter-terrorism advisor John Brennan to head up the CIA, the very agency carrying out the majority of the drone strikes without public oversight. There was also Rand Paul's filibuster of the nomination that drew public attention to the implications of taking the life of an American life with drones. Though Attorney General Eric Holder's pithy letter to Paul said that Americans couldn't be targeted for a drone strike on American soil, it didn't rule it out in the ever-expanding battlefield against unnamed enemies. Americans could still be targeted without judicial process.

The Obama administration's ownership of the drone program made its largest strides through a numerical deployment and public admission. Four Americans were killed with drones. Yes, they were American. Yes, they were targeted. And, yes, four. The acknowledgment of the four Americans killed reasserts the state's stake in controlling numbers by declaring a specific number that exceeds press publications of Americans killed by drones. Revealing the fourth name of Jude Kenan Mohammad asserts the control and apparent disclosure on the part of the government. In scooping the public, the literal 1-Upmanship cries out that even the most intrepid investigative journalists couldn't pick up on this killing. It begins to push the burden of proof back to the critics, knowing that with a passive, cynical and acquiescent public, the state can rest easy.

It will be those who challenge the state who will face an active skepticism from the previously passive cynics. Perhaps the dissonance activates a resistance that isn't marshaled against the state. Instead, people begin questioning what the motives are of those putting forth that critique of the state, and it forces them to marshal evidence in what many already know is occurring, but they can carry on in willful ignorance. Nikolas Rose writes that while numbers appear to shape our political reality as we digest statistics, numbers also have the ability "to
depoliticize who areas of public judgment." The acquiescent are contended with the numerical admission from the state. Contented to know that the state is acknowledging what it is doing with drones, it is able to affect those who only process the war progress heuristically.

**National Defense University and the Future of the War on Terror**

President Obama's May 23, 2013 speech at the National Defense University provided an update to his administration's drone and counterterrorism policy. Engels and Saas argue that War on Terror administration discourse changed to reflect a mere update to the American public instead of attempting to engage them and gain their assent in the fight. This speech, however, begins to work on multiple levels, achieving a deeply ambivalent tone that is able to speak to different audiences so that they may hear what they want to hear from the president. Those critics of George W. Bush who preferred Obama's more open discussion of change in policy latched onto a section near the end where Obama states, "Our systematic effort to dismantle terrorist organizations must continue.... But this war, like all wars, must end. That's what history advises. That's what our democracy demands."63 Liberals praised this acknowledgement, along with the idea that one cannot stomp out the evil that lies in the hearts of all people, as evidence that Obama is different from George W. Bush. Obama's openness of the moral burden he bears for the American people shone through in their appreciation of the speech, hailing it as a change to terrorism policy.64 Critics of the president’s drone policy indicated that very little had actually changed. Grounding the war historically in the first section of the speech, Obama is simultaneously pulled backward by the conservative basis of the policy at the very time he wants to move forward with a change in policy. The historical ties contributed to what Esquire's Tom Junoud writes that Obama did not "offer a new vision of his drone policy but rather a defense of the policy as it exists now."65
139

Obama’s deeply ambivalent speech at NDU mirrored an earlier foreign policy speech at West Point that Ivie calls strategically ambiguous. The December 2009 speech set out Obama’s new strategy in Afghanistan, laying out the plan to bring the then eight-year war in Afghanistan “to a successful conclusion.” Ivie posits that Obama’s rhetorical response to Afghanistan was “characteristically nuanced but structured in a way that it rendered it ambiguous in purpose.”66 Obama was “conflicted at the level of form between accommodating to the actuality of war and the promise of peace.”67 Obama’s way of seeing terrorism and the war in Afghanistan, for Ivie, was “requisite to, but not the same as, changing the actual conduct of foreign policy—at least not immediately, if ever.”68 The promise of peace would come with a cost. The West Point speech did not mention a transitioning of U.S. troops out of Afghanistan, and as Bennis observed, it offered no explanation of how the war would be paid for, nor any reference to the disposition of the “U.S. paid mercenaries…in Afghanistan” who numbered in excess of 100,000.69 These are two examples of a control motive in unenumerated rhetoric. If a public is to fully debate a potential change in war policy, especially if it is proposed and offered for review in a speech like the one at West Point, there is a need for more complete information. Yet the missing budgetary information and the unaccounted for military forces that do not his public rosters signals the state’s position to control numbers not deemed necessary for public debate. Even as the public yearned for change, its options were limited without more complete information that could implicate policies but not harms lives on the ground.

Numbers grounded Obama’s movement through the history of the War on Terror into his continued drone policy, which continued the presentation of the president as the moral actor making the tough decisions. The first numbers Obama mentioned are the 150,000 troops that have returned home after his administration "ended the war in Iraq."70 The next two numbers he lists quickly undermine the positive affect from this change. In the same paragraph, Obama listed the nation's tab for a decade worth of war at over a trillion dollars and the nearly 7,000 Americans
who have died in the war. The vagary of such a number, already too big for most American's to comprehend on a personal or national level, if further muddied by the modifier "well over." The modifier worked to ease the public in two ways. First, it indicated that the details are not relevant for the American public to have at hand. This worked in coordination with the second effect, which further solidifies the state as the sole arbiter of the official number. The soldiers are noted for having made "the ultimate sacrifice," a euphemism that softens the blow that over 10 years of war have killed 6,779 Americans. This number did not include the numerous private contractors who have also died or been killed during the duration of the two wars.\(^\text{71}\)

President Obama’s penchant for beginning his speeches with historical context allowed him to slip into a commemorative rhetoric that echoed President Bush. In the third paragraph of the speech, as he attempted to ground the War on Terror in the realm of past battles through which our democracy has persevered, President Obama reminded his audience at the NDU that “the country was shaken out of complacency” with the attacks on September 11\(^\text{th}\), 2001. He continued by saying that “thousands were taken from us, as clouds of fire, metal and ash descended upon a sun-filled morning.”\(^\text{72}\) This numerical deployment of commemorative rhetoric put the numbers in service of the war. A number that is not up for debate, or open to further interpretation within this tightly spun history, but it is one that aligns you for battle. Even a brief commemorative reminder of this number closes off the moment as contestable, as though the entire country looked at the moment as “a different kind of war,” instead of questioning who did this and if there was perhaps a non-violent response that could be engineered.

The quick disclosure of numbers, including lives taken to defend the U.S. reveals that the technologies of number are not a simple, straightforward process. The numbers in this case abstract the frightening reality of the lives they left behind, and the family members who are left grieving. It is compounded by his passing reference to the total of over a trillion dollars that the war has cost, “exploding our deficits and constraining our ability to nation-build here at home.”\(^\text{73}\)
The passive reference exhibits the control rhetoric by promoting the idea that the administration knows the number and the potential costs to the public, yet there is no need to debate the issue at this time. While much of the speech appears to invite the audience to debate the potential change in how the War on Terror is carried out, many of the numbers deployed do not offer the audience any grounds to stand or even contest. The closing off of deliberation is reinforced in Obama’s next pivot to the metaphorical crossroads at which America finds itself, one that means the country must "define the nature and scope of this struggle, or else it will define us," moves the speech into the reflective realm. Obama’s deployment of numerical rhetorics reflects the control motive that cordons off deliberation in this particular area of public policy. Similar to the vague numbers used by President Bush in the 2002 State of the Union address, Obama’s discussion of numbers remains abstract enough that they almost imply that the debate warrants no further deliberation on the part of the people.

Obama acknowledged the discrepancy between civilians killed and the publicly unenumerated “U.S. assessments of such casualties and nongovernmental reports." Obama admitted that the legalistic rhetoric and justifications for the drone policy cannot "justify" the loss to the families of the civilians. Bearing the moral burden, Obama pleaded that for he and those in his command the "deaths will haunt us as long as we live, just as we are haunted by the civilian casualties that have occurred throughout conventional fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq." Instead of engaging in this debate, or even offering a potential number that could be rejected and defended, Obama merely mentioned the discrepancy in the tally of civilian deaths caused by drone strikes. Here the unenumerated rhetorics serve a control motive, refusing to engaging in the debate or conversation while attempting to shift the conversation to something even more remote: morality. Obama's bearing of the moral burden first circulated in the revelation of the “kill list” that the Obama administration used to determine strategic drone strikes.
The internal dynamics of the moral burden to launch strikes first surfaced with newspaper reports of a secret kill list of al Qaeda personnel that were being considered for a targeted missile strike. A May 29, 2012 *New York Times* article documented President Obama’s secret “kill list” strategy for selecting targets of United States drone attacks. The article describes the process in which more than 100 members of the government’s “sprawling national security apparatus” gather by secure video conference to “pore over the terrorist suspects’ biographies and recommend to the president who should be the next to die.”76 The administration seeks to portray President Obama as vexed by the moral choices he must make, reserving the decision for the strike only for himself, and only when he is assured that the terrorist poses a risk to the United States.77

The public discussion of the “kill list” is important to this discussion of numerical rhetorics for two reasons. First, the Obama administration boasts of the fact that the number of civilians killed in drone attacks is in single digits, and has accomplished this by redefining combatant. In a speech at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, John Brennan, the President’s counterterrorism advisor, implored that the administration’s drone attacks were legal, ethical, and wise.78 Extolling the high standards to which the United States holds itself, Brennan noted multiple times in the speech that targets are chosen so that civilian casualties are limited or eliminated altogether. The 2012 speech walked back Brennan’s position from June 2011, where he said, “...that nearly for the past year [August 2010 to June 2011] there hasn’t been a single collateral death because of the exceptional proficiency, precision of the capabilities that we’ve been able to develop.”79 Even when confronted with findings of civilian casualties, the administration held its ground.80 Part of the reason the administration maintains such a strong stance can be explained by the administration’s redefinition of combatant. President Obama has now embraced a “disputed” method of counting civilian casualties that “in effects counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants...unless there is explicit intelligence
posthumously proving them innocent.”^{81} The simplistic logic, reduced to guilt by association unless proven innocent after one is killed, strikes at the moral framework and ethical dilemmas that President Obama brings on himself.

The “kill list” debate informs on the numerical rhetorics of war for a second, moral reason. By placing himself at the center of the decision-making, President Obama has “reserved to himself the final moral calculation” of ending a person’s life.^{82} Obama’s portrayal of bringing Christian “just war” doctrines of Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine to bear on the drone attacks is an attempt to take a moral responsibility for the action, knowing that “bad strikes can tarnish America’s image and derail diplomacy.”^{83} Yet what this masks is the bureaucratic national security apparatus that aides in the decision-making process, and the invisibility of criteria for who warrants targeting.^{84} The single figurehead provides an entry to criticism, but, because the criteria for attack remains confidential, we cannot understand what one must do to warrant an attack. Obama’s Chief of Staff is quoted in the New York Times article questioning the efficacy of the discussions, “One guy gets knocked off, and that guy’s driver, who’s No. 21, becomes 20? At what point are you just filling the bucket with numbers?”^{85} The tone of the article did not provide much room for dissent, as the administrative viewpoint shown through, though a greater concern is the increased power the president has now taken. Condemning the president, Anthony Romero, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union, writes, “No president should be given that breathtaking level of power — essentially serving as judge, jury and executioner without any check or balance.”^{86} Future holders of the office will not relinquish the power grab of President Obama unless more criticism is brought to bear on this move. Further, we must ask if the power to decide unilaterally should be invested in a single person who is currently without rebuke or whether a more open discussion of how the process unfolds could quell such debate.

Perhaps more than any other speech, Obama’s May 2013 NDU speech highlights the change in rhetorics from Bush and Obama’s deployment of numbers. While the Bush
administration primarily remained within the realm of commemorative rhetoric, the Obama administration prioritized control rhetorics. One result of the shift is the easy contrast to Bush’s handling of the War. A citizen who was concerned with Bush’s avoidance of the realities that innocents are killed in war may be relieved by Obama’s enumeration of the Americans targeted or the acknowledgment that innocents have been killed. A second result of the numerical rhetoric of Obama is that it brings his rhetoric back within the fold of traditional presidential war genre as outlined by Campbell and Jamieson, specifically that a decision to go to war followed extensive deliberation. The extensive deliberation is sometimes verbalized by the president, and it is also to be inferred when one reads newspaper of articles of the president struggling with the moral burden of deciding when to launch particular strikes against al Qaeda operatives.

This chapter discussed the new formulations of the commemorative and control motives of numerical rhetorics during the War on Terror. Faced with changing circumstances and new wars ahead, the Bush and Obama administration carefully deployed numerical rhetorics to limit the scope of democratic deliberation when it comes to the country’s participation in Iraq and beyond. The commemorative motives of unenumeration mirror what Mercieca called “epideictic violence,” a discourse that is meant to celebrate and promote certain values while silencing opponents and disabling criticism. Closing off access to greater information regarding a nation’s march to war, particularly if wrapped in epideictic discourse, removes grounds for critique and limits the areas of contestation. Control rhetorics also serve a function of narrowing the realm of public deliberation because the state attempts to assert itself as the sole arbiter of the believable number. Though it can be contested, the burden of proof shifts dramatically to the critics. Further, a control rhetoric promotes the idea that the administration knows the number and the potential costs to the public, yet there is no need to debate the issue at this time.
In their essay on the post-rhetorical presidency, Stephen Hartnett and Jenifer Mercieca echo the call of rhetorical critics for a return to a more full, healthy public realm of deliberation. They say that democracy cannot long survive without “discourse that enables citizens to critique their government, debate that is transparent and open to competing opinions, and decision-making process based on balancing contrasting perspectives, thus creating a situation in which decisions are made for the common good, not just the benefit of the few.”

This chapter sought to examine the rhetoric of the Bush and Obama administrations with a focus on their numerical deployments to highlight the rhetorical markers of the limiting deliberation during the War on Terror.

Numerical rhetorics remain an area of war justifications that need to be demystified if we hope to get closer to the realm of equal and open public deliberation over the decision of taking a country to war. It is important not only to consider what is counted and how it is used, but also to examine what is not counted, and the reasons behind the omission. An examination of the numerical rhetorics in a time of war gets us closer to understanding the discourses justifying and perpetuating war. Viewing the state's justifications through the rhetorics of commemoration and control also get us closer to understanding a great pitfall in the use of numbers to represent a reality. In a democracy that deals with representation and recognition, and in which, as both Walter Lippmann and John Dewey recognized, citizens are struggling to make sense of complicated realities (with varying results); it is easy enough to assume that what is not counted is not there.

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administration to be at fault for 9/11—instead of preventing it, they were on “sabbatical.” There is evidence that George W Bush’s administration ignored early intelligence that said Osama bin Laden was prepared to strike the U.S., beginning with reports in spring of 2001.

3 Derek H. Chollet and James M. Goldgeier, America Between the Wars: From 11/9 to 9/11: The Misunderstood Years Between the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Start of the War on Terror (New York: BBS Public Affairs, 2008), xi.


7 Robert Ivie, Democracy and America’s War on Terror (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 193.


9 Hartnett and Stengrim, 2.


11 Agamben, 6.

12 Agamben, 7.

13 Agamben, 7.
Jacques Derrida offered a correction for Agamben’s assumed clear distinction between zoe and bios. “All of Agamben's demonstrative strategy, here and elsewhere, puts its money on a distinction or a radical, clear, univocal exclusion, among the Greeks and in Aristotle in particular, between bare life (zoe), common to all living beings (animals, men, and gods), and life qualified as individual or group life (bios: bios theoreti
kos, for example, contemplative life, bios apolaustikos, life of pleasure, bios politikos, political life). What is unfortunate is that this distinction is never so clear and secure…” Jacques Derrida, The Beast and the Sovereign, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 316.


One exception to the argument that Bush used primarily vague numerical rhetorics and justifications for the war is Colin Powell’s presentation at the UN in February of 2003. Even this presentation, with its visual aids and the ethos of Powell, was not as specific as many believe. When Colin Powell entered the United Nations to deliver the case for war in Iraq, David Zarefsky noted that the majority of Powell’s visual evidence was circumstantial. Unlike the case of Adlai Stevenson, who entered the same chamber forty years prior to reveal stockpiles of weapons in Cuba, Powell had a more difficult talk in front of him. The types of arguments he used relied heavily on narrative and the preconceived notions about Saddam Hussein and his willingness to use weapons of mass destruction, even on his own people. Minimal attention was given to terrorist ties and human rights violations, because they would be too tenuous and could weaken his argument that action needed to be taken to stop the use of the weapons. See David. Zarefsky, “Making the Case for War: Colin Powell at the United Nations,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10 (2007): 275–302, doi:10.1353/rap.2007.0043.


Bush, “2002 SOTU.”


Countless examples exist of these statistics being widely available, ranging from icasualties.org to seeing the names and faces printed in the local newspaper.

American Life, What’s In A Number? — 2006 Edition. Altering the angle by which the bomb would be delivered could lessen the “collateral damage,” that is the deaths of civilians. An alternate method would be to delay an explosion by five nanoseconds. Such an incremental delay, paired with a penetrating warhead, would allow the bomb to bury itself in the ground, causing a building to implode on itself instead of spreading to neighboring buildings.


Rose, Powers of Freedom, 6.

Rose, Powers of Freedom, 19.


41 Stahl, “A Clockwork War,” 75.


Holder, “Holder Remarks at Northwestern University.”

Rose, Powers of Freedom, 8-9.


Holder, “Holder Remarks at Northwestern University.”

Holder, “Holder Remarks at Northwestern University.”

Holder, “Holder Remarks at Northwestern University.”


Rose, Powers of Freedom, 197-198. This argument is supported by Wendy Brown’s point in Walled States, Waning Sovereignty, that the triumph of neoliberalism today has undermined the original two goals of nation-state sovereignty (as ratified in the Treaty of


59 Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 4. In Foucault’s work on governmentality, there is a difference between governing and domination, where the former is acting and trying to understand what mobilizes those being governed, while domination is characterized by ignoring or crushing the capacity for action.


http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/comment/2013/05/obama-speech-drones-closing-guantanamo.html.


67 Ivie, “Obama at West Point,” 728.

68 Ivie, “Obama at West Point,” 732.

69 Phyllis Bennis, “Annotate This! President Obama’s Afghanistan Escalation Speech,” Foreign Policy In Focus, December 2, 2009, http://fpif.org/annotate_this_president_obamas_afghanistan_escalation_speech/.

70 Obama, Obama’s Speech on the Future of the War on Terror.


72 Obama, Obama’s Speech on the Future of the War on Terror.

73 Obama, Obama’s Speech on the Future of the War on Terror.

74 Obama, Obama’s Speech on the Future of the War on Terror.

75 Obama, Obama’s Speech on the Future of the War on Terror.


77 While the criteria for a targeted drone strike is when a suspected terrorist poses an “imminent threat to the United States,” the article notes this was quickly complicated by the assassination of Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban. Meshud’s group targeted
the Pakistani government, and did not pose an open and direct threat to the United States; however, the President approved the kill because the administration needed the approval of the Pakistani government to carry out drone strikes in their country. In order to justify the attack, the administration found that he “represented a threat, if not to the homeland, to American personnel in Pakistan.” Becker and Shane, “Secret Kill List.”


81 Becker and Shane, “Secret Kill List.”

82 Becker and Shane, “Secret Kill List.”

83 Becker and Shane, “Secret Kill List.” The just war doctrine of Thomas Aquinas and Augustine find that three elements are necessary: power to engage in war is invested in the government and not an individual, there must be a just cause, or those attacked must be deserving in some way, and, third, peace must be the central motive.


85 Becker and Shane, “Secret Kill List.”
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/opinion/when-the-president-orders-a-killing.html

Stephen John Hartnett and Jennifer Rose Mercieca, “‘A Discovered Dissembler Can Achieve Nothing Great’; Or, Four Theses on the Death of Presidential Rhetoric in an Age of Empire,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (December 1, 2007), 601.

Chapter 4

Anti-War Numbers and the Deliberative Motive

Sirens filled the air and the ground shook with war. Civilian casualties has been a cost that was predetermined. When interviewed for report, victims pleaded in frustration, Their claim: That this was a war without reason.

Against Me! “White People for Peace”

In his first inaugural speech on January 20, 2009, President Obama declared, “America is a friend of each nation, and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity.” Attempting to set a tone different from the previous administration, Obama gestured toward a humble pursuit of America’s goals that would rely on a renewed call for “cooperation and understanding between nations” around the world. He noted that as president he is the inheritor of a legacy forged by the generations who faced down fascism and communism. They knew, Obama said, that “new that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.” The feeble gesture to humility was quickly balanced by the claim that “We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense,” for Obama inherited a War on Terror that continued to expand. Soon he would have to decide how he would deal with military efforts initiated by outgoing President George W. Bush in countries including Pakistan, where 132 people had been killed in 38 suspected U.S. missile strikes between August 2008 and January 2009. In a 2007 statement, Obama stated that he favored taking direct action in Pakistan against potential threats to U.S. security if Pakistan security forces did not act. Following Obama’s inauguration, Pakistan’s ambassador to Washington said that Pakistan was hoping Obama would
follow through on the call for cooperation and be “more patient while dealing with” the country, urging Obama to “hear us out.”

Three days after his inaugural, Obama launched the first drone strike of his administration that targeted supposed Taliban camps in Pakistan. While initial reports said up to ten militants were killed, including five foreign national fighters and possibly a “high-value target,” reports of civilian casualties soon emerged. In the first strike, at least nine civilians had died, and the lone survivor, 14-year-old Fahim Qureshi, suffered horrific injuries including “shrapnel wounds in his stomach, a fractured skull and a lost eye.” Later the same day, the CIA launched another strike, killing between five and ten people, all civilians. Briefed of the civilian casualties by CIA Director Michael Hayden, Obama was understandably disturbed. His new presidency, just days old, suffered a setback in its first military strike, and threatened America’s message to the Muslim world that would forge a “new partnership based on mutual respect and mutual interest.”

The first deaths of innocent civilians during Obama’s administration at the hands of CIA-fired drone missiles complicated the president’s stature as pursuing a different kind of foreign policy track from his predecessor. In what would become standard operating procedure for much of his first term, President Obama’s administration refused to publicly discuss drone strikes, whether they were successful or had killed civilians. Robert Gibbs, Obama’s first press secretary, declined to answer questions about the first strikes saying, “I am not going to get into these matters.” In the more than 390 drone strikes during the Obama administration, the strikes have killed more than 2,400 people, at least 273 of them reportedly civilian. Even though the civilian deaths were published in the newspaper, the acknowledgement of their existence rarely rose to the level of the president’s administration. Instead, it was left to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and investigative journalists to publish these stories, acknowledging the innocent death tolls, and in many cases seeking to promote democratic discussion on the issue of drones.
This chapter investigates the use of numbers by anti-war groups, and how they deploy numbers differently from the Bush and Obama administrations. In their use of numbers, anti-war groups at times certainly utilize commemoration and control, but many of their numbers are also driven by a different motive altogether: democratic deliberation. The deliberative motive seeks to uncover hidden or rarely discussed numbers, attempting to move it into the realm of democratic deliberation. A part of this motive is the belief that the public is capable of understanding complex information and contributing to decisions to go to war.Echoing the democratic theory of John Dewey, the deliberative motive promotes the idea that a democratic community cannot be handed down by a democratic elite, but instead is reliant on the active participation of citizens. Writing about the ethical import of the process of democracy as opposed to aristocratic rule, Dewey states, “Humanity cannot be content with a good which is procured from without, however high and otherwise complete that good.” In this realm, the ends may be the same for democratic decisions compared with elite decision-making, but the deliberative motive argues for the ethical importance of democratic participation. The pressure applied by these groups seeks at the very least acknowledgment of the numbers, which usually represents lives of those killed in the war, and sometimes advocates openly for a policy change in light of the newly publicized numbers. This chapter examines how the numbers use the criteria for judgment discussed in chapter 3: accuracy, transparency, and magnitude. When the government did not produce a number or produced a rounded figure, these groups attempted to bring precision to the measurement. Along with that precision, the groups discussed in great detail the means by which they produced the numbers, frequently trying to distance themselves from other groups or figures that they believed would be dismissed out of hand. Finally, the greatest challenge for these anti-war groups was the processes of making the numbers resonate with the public.

In selecting the particular case studies for this chapter, it was important to me to pay attention to the specific roles that these groups play in the larger movement for peace. I will
analyze the mission statements, and the other statements of purpose produced by these groups, in order to place the groups in their proper context, so as not to generalize too broadly to the anti-war movement any sentiment or argument they produce. Moreover, it is also important to respect their choices and limited focus, and acknowledge their contributions to the anti-war effort, however small, on their own terms.

The first part of this chapter provides some background on the antiwar movement, particularly in the United States, following the September 11th attacks through the start of the war in Iraq. This section showcases the quick growth of the movement as the Iraq war approached, and the rapid decline after the war began. After the start of the war, with the antiwar movement stymied, NGOs and other researchers took up the cause through research and documentation of different human rights abuses and totals of victims killed by US drones. My first NGO case study is of Human Rights Watch (HRW), a group that investigates potential violations of international humanitarian law by parties in a conflict. Human Rights Watch promotes the quality of the research that includes on-the-ground monitoring, as well as statistical research, bomb data analysis, and use of satellite photography to document civilian casualties. My second case study examines the work of Les Roberts and his multiple studies of the Iraqi dead during the first years of the war. Roberts’ studies produced large numbers that baffled many observers, as they exceeded other reports, which lead many to quickly dismiss the numbers without ever engaging them. My final case study of the Bureau for Investigative Journalism analyzes the group’s documentation of drone victims, moving from a process of counting into a project to name all of the victims. These case studies represent an important intervention in the state’s monopolization in the use of numbers. These anti-war groups offer a chance to study how the power of numbers can serve a deliberative end, challenging the claims of the state as well as directly engaging the public in a conversation about the costs of war.
Anti-War Efforts Following 9/11 through Iraq

It was difficult to mobilize opposition to the war in Afghanistan in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks. Some argued that it was a “just war” that could be “validated by a flexible reading of international law.” The September 11th attacks, and the contributing rhetoric from President Bush and his administration discussed in chapter 3, transitioned the country to respond to the attacks with war. This response differed from the series of terrorist attacks against the United States in the 30 years preceding 2001. This included the 1983 suicide bombing of Marine barracks in Beirut that killed 241 American servicemen; the 1984 bombings of the US Embassy annex in Lebanon that killed 22 people, including Americans; the 1998 US Embassy bombings in Nairobi, Kenya that killed 214 people including 12 Americans, and in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which killed 10 people; and the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole at port in Aden, Yemen that killed 17 US sailors. As the media pitched the story, after 9/11, everything had changed. This included the American response. For many Americans, in addition to the case built by President Bush, the difference hinged on the magnitude of the attacks, as well as their audacity. In the months that followed the attacks, attempts to motivate large swaths of the country to mobilize against the war appeared futile.

Yet, even by the end of 2001, some who supported the initial response reconsidered after seeing how the war was being handled, including the “disregard for civilian life, the over-reliance on air power, the vindictive mistreatment of captured personnel, and the general ineffectiveness of the military operations with respect to apprehending the al Qaeda leadership” and diminishing their capacities for further attacks. While some citizens had misgivings about earlier support, the seemingly futile efforts to pre-empt a war in Afghanistan, as well as protests against the continuing war, lacked the mass mobilization efforts that resurged in the buildup to the War in Iraq.
The culmination of the anti-war protests for the Iraq War occurred with the worldwide protests on February 15, 2003. In over 600 locations across the globe well over 11.25 million people protested the push US and UK’s push to war in Iraq. In the United States, the February 15 protests were the largest antiwar protests in history, and for Europe, they were the largest since the 1991 Gulf War protests. The protests against the imminent attack on Iraq were also called “undoubtedly among the greatest examples (possibly the greatest example) of coordinated protest events in history.” Part of the success stemmed from the fact that makeup of the building protest movement, which Stephen Zunes, professor of politics at the University of San Francisco, observed as “a much more mainstream movement than the anti-Vietnam War movement was at a comparable stage.” The worldwide protest was the culmination of international efforts to slow the march to war that began at the European Social Forum in early October 2002. Approximately forty thousand activists representing 600 organizations gathered for the four-day event setup for the “democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences, and planning of effective action among entities and movements of civil society that are engaged in building a planetary society centered on the human being.” Many groups within the anti-war movement were motivated by a deliberative impulse, calling for further discussion and consideration of non-violent responses to the impending War in Iraq. The Forum produced a call that compelled activists to begin organizing enormous anti-war demonstrations in their nation’s capital on February 15, as well a contingency if the war started sooner to protest the Saturday following the start of the war.

Political leaders brushed the movement and impact of the February 15, 2003 protests aside. Condoleezza Rice, US National Security Advisor to President Bush, dismissed the protests stating that they would “not affect their determination to confront Saddam Hussein and help the Iraqi people.” She continued by justifying the US strikes from a human rights perspective, “They’re not stating what they think in Baghdad, because that’s a regime that cuts people’s
tongues out if they say what they think.” In the United States, the government generally had majority support of the public, with upwards of 90 percent considering Iraq a threat to the United States, and over half the surveyed population supported the war even without Security Council approval. A goal of Colin Powell’s presentation at the UN on February 5, 2003 was to secure public support for the war among the American public. A Newsweek poll following the speech found that 70 percent of people sampled supported attacking Saddam Hussein, up 10 percent from two weeks before the speech. Similarly in England, only 40 percent of the population agreed with antiwar questions in a Gallup poll, which opened the door for a terse response from the Prime Minister. Tony Blair shrugged off protestors by saying that they were advocating for the status quo, which would have “consequences, paid in blood.” Australian Prime Minister John Howard, who backed Bush and Blair’s push for war, said, “I don’t know that you can measure public opinion just by the number of people that turn up at demonstrations.” The cool reception from Anglo leaders is not surprising given the dominant role they played in promoting the preemptive strike on Iraq, as well as their creative collective interpretation that UN Security Council resolution 1441’s phrasing that Iraq would “face serious consequences” if they continued violating their international obligations meant that they could engage in a military response.

Despite the cold shoulder from major political figures, Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida considered the protests to be a “sign of the birth of a European public sphere.” Never before had such a “large-scale, global, carefully planned and coordinated day of action” taken place around the world. In a unified voice, the world spoke out, “Don’t Attack Iraq.” In the course of a few months, the movement in the United States had reached mobilization levels that took years to achieve during the Vietnam War. Utilizing social and mass media to communicate its message, the movement involved religious communities, trade unions, Hollywood celebrities, academics, women’s organizations, environmentalists, and many more. Social movement scholar Barbara Epstein wrote that the February 15 protests are the largest transnational antiwar
Patrick Tyler of the *New York Times* wrote that “the huge anti-war demonstrations around the world this weekend are reminders that there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion.” The second superpower showed how the unity the United States possessed following the September 11 attacks throughout Europe was fading, and that the battle for the hearts and minds of millions across the globe would be more difficult with Iraq.

Even though the antiwar movement had a role in shaping strong opinions, it was unable to achieve its primary objective of preventing an attack on Iraq. After the bombing of Iraq began on March 20, 2003, the great movement that swelled so quickly in the six months before the war rapidly lost its force. While groups would continue to protest the war in earnest at it continued, never again did the US or worldwide antiwar movements reach the level of engagement they had before the bombs fell. One reason given for the declining numbers is the makeup of the movement. Many of the organizations that took part in the antiwar demonstrations were founded on diverging topics (e.g., labor rights, social justice, women’s issues, and combating racism), and as the pressing crisis of the attacking Iraq came and went, the groups returned to their core organizational objectives and left the antiwar efforts behind. Many books have been written that tell the history of this movement, who the active organizations were, how they organized, and what motivated activists to turn out.

The anti-war movement did not stop the invasion of Iraq, but groups continued to press for recognition of the total costs of war, including a counting of the dead. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a Quaker organization, planned a simple protest in January 2004 to call attention to the human toll of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars. The exhibition, called Eyes Wide Open, featured an empty pair of military boots honoring each U.S. military casualty. The simple representation of a pair of boots for each soldier produced an effect of bringing an accurate count of the human costs of war to a variety of publics. By the end of 2007, the Eyes
Wide Open exhibit had traveled to 44 states, and had totaled over 3,400 boots for U.S. casualties. In addition to the soldiers’ boots, AFSC included civilian shoes to represent Iraqi causalities, and the group displayed a wall of remembrance that listed over 3,000 Iraq names. The boots and shoes as a stand-in for the bodies lost to war worked as AFSC’s means to overcome the problem of magnitude and a number’s ability to abstract an identity. The group tagged each pair with a soldier’s name, age, rank and home state, and arranged them alphabetically, by state. In some cases, pairs of boots were replaced with soldiers' actual boots, donated by families who support the exhibit.

How then is the act of counting part of the deliberative motive? The act of counting “is an inherently territorializing activity.” Andrea Mennicken and Peter Miller note that the calculative instruments of counting “transform not only the possibilities for personhood, they also construct the calculable spaces that individuals inhabit within firms and other organizations.” In other words, the instruments of counting remain marginal until social forces, or social groups, are capable of animating it. In this way, the deliberative forces that produce numbers in order to further deliberation are also charged with the task of using the tools to create meaning. The creation of meaning for these numbers is a part of magnitude, or how one is able to make a concept or number visible and consumable for a given audience. The antiwar groups discussed below proceed with different methods for making the numbers resonate, and thus are engaged in a process of rhetorical meaning making. The numbers and names of victims become a tool, or a metric, for the public is able to assess and compare the progress or moral worth of a war. The rest of this chapter examines the work of non-governmental organizations and journalistic groups that have continued to monitor the effects of the war, at times paying particular attention to civilian casualties. The accounts or reports created by these organizations are meant to be circulated between citizen and activist alike. The groups produce reports to fill a gap left by the
government’s unenumeration, and the groups seeks to engage the public in deliberations regarding the costs of the war, both financial and moral.

**Human Rights Watch, Numbers, and Violations of International Humanitarian Law**

Two days after Baghdad fell, on Friday April 11, 2003, Mark Garlasco walked out of his Pentagon job. For seven years, Garlasco had worked as the chief of high-level targeting for the Joint Staff, where he spent upwards of eighteen hours a day tracking and planning out the killing of Saddam Hussein and other high-ranking officials within the Iraqi government. He is credited with developing the “deck of cards” distributed to U.S. soldiers during the invasion. These cards featured the fifty-five most wanted officials of Saddam Hussein’s regime, including his sons. Though personally opposed to the war, Garlasco told *This American Life* that he remained on the job throughout the first phase because he felt that he cared more than anyone else about minimizing civilian casualties, and he had already invested so much into the planning of strikes months before the second gulf war began. He feared that if a less experienced person took over the planning, civilian casualties could have been much higher.

Three days after he left out of the Pentagon, on April 14, Garlasco walked into the non-profit Human Rights Watch looking for a job. In less than a week, Garlasco was on a plane to Iraq as a part of a Human Rights Watch investigative team inspecting civilian casualties of the war. While there, he was able to witness his “handiwork,” standing in craters that he helped to target. To be certain, Human Rights Watch did not travel to Iraq to estimate the total numbers of civilian casualties. The investigative group had two objectives: “(1) to identify and investigate potential violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) by the parties to the conflict, and (2) to identify patterns of combat by those parties which may have caused civilian casualties and suffering that could have been avoided if additional precautions had been taken.”

International
human rights law does not outlaw civilian casualties in war, but armed forces are “obliged to take all feasible precautions for avoiding civilian losses,” and to refrain from attacks that are indiscriminate or “where expected civilian harm exceeds the military gain.” The following section will discuss the history of Human Rights Watch, and then move on to their reporting in Iraq, paying particular attention to the ways they initiate discussion over civilian casualties and other violations of international human rights law.

Human Rights Watch was founded in 1978 with creation of Helsinki Watch, a project that supported citizen groups that formed throughout the Soviet Union to monitor government compliance with the 1975 Helsinki Accords. The 1975 accords represented a significant step toward decreases Cold War tensions between the West and the Soviet Union, even as the agreement solidified the USSR’s territorial gains throughout Europe. Helsinki Watch adopted a methodology of “publicly ‘naming and shaming’ abusive governments through media coverage and through direct exchanges with policymakers.” The group claims that their work of shining the spotlight on human rights violations by the Soviet Union in the USSR and Eastern Europe contributed to the democratic transformations of many European states in the late 1980s.

The group expanded throughout the 1980s and 1990s, beginning with the violent civil wars in Central America. In 1981, Americas Watch was founded, and it relied on “extensive on-the-ground fact-finding” to document the abuses by government forces. The group also applied “international humanitarian law to investigate and expose war crimes by rebel groups.” The focus on international law violations solidified the group’s role in documenting and investigating alleged atrocities, as well as pressing change at the level of government. Following the formation of Asia Watch in 1985, Africa Watch in 1988, and Middle East Watch in 1989, the group adopted the inclusive name Human Rights Watch formally in 1988. Human Rights Watch ties its mission closely with the methodology of bearing witness to the atrocities and the ability of such reporting to bring about structural change. To showcase their efficacy, HRW links to 206
different stories and policy changes that show the impact the group has had in promoting human rights around the world.\textsuperscript{45} In an effort to stay at the forefront of promoting respect for human rights, HRW has combined their traditional on-the-ground fact-finding methodology with “statistical research, satellite photography, and bomb-data analysis.”\textsuperscript{46} The promotion of new methodologies, as well as the emphasis that is placed on statistics indicates that HRW is attempting to meet the demands of both accuracy and transparency in their efforts to bring about social change.

**Non-governmental counting in Iraq**

A study in the *Journal of Risk Uncertainty* investigated the process of counting causalities and noted that the “adequacy of causality records depends on how they are used.”\textsuperscript{47} The researchers found that the purpose of causality records can either be essential or instrumental. An example of an essential purpose would be capturing cultural or social meaning about individual casualties (e.g., differences in cultural burial rituals for men and women). An instrumental purpose would be used for “relating patterns of casualties to possible causes and effects.”\textsuperscript{48} These choices of selecting between instrumental or essential purposes, and counting those killed during missions begin to show the rhetorical nature of counting; rhetors create different meaning—or can paint an entirely different picture for the polity—through selective use of numbers. A patina of control and competence emerges when the government accurately tracks the deaths of their own soldiers, and gives them their fair remembrance. However, the polish begins to fade when the full impact of the war, particularly the full toll of civilian deaths, is kept secret and slowly emerges through non-governmental sources.

Whatever the administration’s motives were in neglecting to release casualty numbers, the task of counting fell onto non-governmental organizations. For these international
organizations, the casualty counts served an instrumental purpose, or relating patterns of causalties to the potential causes or effects. In December 2003, Human Rights Watch published a reported titled “Off Target: The Conduct of the War and Civilian Casualties in Iraq.” The 147-page HRW report claimed that its main goal was not to count civilian casualties. Instead they were there to bring the weight of the organization’s reputation to bear in investigating the violations of international human rights law by both sides of the conflict, as well as attempting to identify “patterns of combat” used by each side that caused undue totals of civilian casualties that could have been prevented. The deliberative motive in HRW’s work exemplifies how anti-war groups are able to harness statistics, traditionally a technology of governance used by the state since the 18th century, to challenge the state’s claims and their formulation of knowledge/power.

The de-centering of the location of the knowledge/power when it comes to civilian casualties begins to shift the ability that the state has to control information, particularly when it comes to victims of war. By utilizing the power of statistics and measurements akin to Bruno Latour’s concept of inscription devices, anti-war groups like HRW are able to bring forth a too-oft hidden reality of war. Latour defined inscription devices as an “apparatus or particular configuration of such items which can transform a material substance” and thus make them measurable. In addition to highlighting the dark side of war, the anti-war groups also had to devise techniques for “inscribing it in such a way as to make the domain in question susceptible to evaluation, calculation and intervention.”

Through the first year of the war, HRW kept an accurate track of cluster munitions used by coalition forces. The HRW used this data in relation to reports of civilian causalities to carry out its mission of investigating international humanitarian law violations. To that end, the HRW reported two different sets of numbers for the use of cluster bombs. Cluster bombs are a form of airdropped or ground-launched explosive weapons that release dozens or hundreds of smaller submunitions, referred to as bomblets, if dropped from the air, or grenades if delivered from the
On the summary page of the report, HRW wrote that coalition forces “used 13,000 cluster munitions, containing nearly 2 million submunitions that killed or wounded more than 1,000 civilians.” Visitors that are not likely to engage in the details of the full report readily take in the rounded numbers. For those seeking more specific and accurate information, the full report cites U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) published numbers. The U.S. reportedly used 10,782 cluster munitions, which contained at least 1.8 submunitions. The British added an additional 2,100 ground-launched cluster munitions, which contained 113,190 submunitions. In this way, HRW is able to engage potential readers with an appropriate level of detail for their needs. Human Rights Watch used the government’s own specific numbers to their own end, publishing the numbers, but giving them a new context. Instead of a report that details the amount of munitions used by U.S. and allied forces, HRW’s report links the bombs to their result, which too frequently is that of civilian casualties. The use of cluster munitions remains one of the least accurate methods of targeting a specific location, and is especially dangerous in population centers. The HRW found that the large amount of inaccurate munitions used by coalition troops could be causally linked with civilian casualties.

The lack of the government’s enumeration of civilian casualties opened the space for HRW to prompt deliberation over the way the war is being fought. One area that HRW engaged this debate is through a discussion of the leftover bombs that were responsible for a large amount of civilian casualties. During the opening phase of the war, explosive remnants of war “caused hundreds of civilian casualties during and after major hostilities and continue to do so today.” Due to the rapidly changing landscape of the battlefield, U.S.-led troops cannot clean up all unused and unexploded munitions fired in the course of a battle. The result of these quick military movements is tens of thousands of cluster munition ‘duds,’ which are the cluster munitions that did not detonate. The undetonated munitions then become de facto landmines. HRW calculated the leftover munitions, assuming a failure rate of five percent, would have totaled about 90,000
As de facto landmines that will explode on contact, the leftover munitions were responsible for daily deaths as children searched for scrap metal or other civilians explored munitions that were left behind by the military. HRW noted that the search of munitions left behind by troops, including Iraqi military and Fedayeen forces, were used in the deadly truck bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad on August 19, 2003. The dispersed responsibility, though titled more toward the U.S.-led forces, reflected HRW’s neutral observer role, showing that both sides are culpable for the results. Yet to promote change in how the war is fought, the report sought to increase deliberation through its deployment of numbers of the untold story of civilian casualties. The documentation of the explosive remnants of war was used to push for “the need for armed forces to consider the post-attack effects of their actions.”

To increase the resonance of a discussion of the leftover cluster bombs, HRW offered detailed stories that included the names, ages, and sometimes pictures of the victims in Iraq. The focus on resonance acts as means to overcome the problem of magnitude when too often the civilian deaths are aggregated up into a larger total (e.g., 35 people were killed in a roadside bombing). The stories highlighted the fact that civilians remained at risk weeks after the main battles had been fought and the military had moved to the next town. For example, in the city of al-Hilla, the hospital treated casualties of the battle almost daily in the weeks following the battle that started on March 31. From April 1 through April 11, the al-Hilla General Teaching Hospital recorded 221 war-related injuries, most occurring because of duds. From May through August the hospital recorded a further thirty-one injuries attributable to duds. Human Rights Watch featured thirteen-year-old Falah Hassan who was injured by an unexploded munition in a town just a few miles south of al-Hilla on March 26. The explosion ripped off his right hand, spread shrapnel throughout his body, and took soft tissue in his lower limbs and left index finger. As of May 19, Hassan was still in the hospital waiting for skin grafts.
The focus on victims of unexploded cluster munitions continued following a pattern that increasingly became more personal. To start their discussion of a particular location, HRW revealed the total number of civilians injured due to the duds. They noted that Al-Najaf Teaching Hospital treated 109 injured civilians in the week following the main battle. This total included 28 children. The next step for HRW was to have the victims tell their own story, which usually involved unexpected interaction with the unexploded bomblets. On March 26, Samir Qassim `Abbas, a 24-year-old taxi driver and college student entered a house of his next pickup. Upon arrival, he kicked what “looked like a piece of lamp,” but what was in fact a bomblet that exploded upon impact, leaving him with injuries and bone loss in both legs.\(^6\) In the town of al-Nasiriyya, three young boys were injured by an unexploded cluster munition on April 28, 2003. Elven year old Yasir Hamid suffered mild burns, while his seven-year-old brother, Hussain, fractured his leg. Their 11-year old cousin and neighbor Mahir Qandil was also injured.\(^6\)

The stories of cluster bomb victims relayed by HRW engage the criteria of magnitude through its relation of proximity in the details. The format of these narratives is amplification to an emotional end. The stories grow increasingly more detailed, and thus more personal as the paragraphs progress. First, there is the broad statement of injured civilians in the battle, then slowly the reader is introduced to the victims, and the victim recalls their stories, sometimes themselves. This use of *enargia*, or a vivid description that can be inherently moving, focuses the attention on the devastation experienced by innocent civilians after the war has moved to the next town.\(^6\) The emotional buildup attempts to move the audience to sympathize with the victims while highlighting the destruction that occurs in war. One effect of this *enargia* is increased resonance with the audience. No longer are they just an aggregated number of casualties, but they are real victims with names, ages, stories, and sometimes pictures. The stories also showcase the two-step process for respecting and acknowledging the suffering of victims: first they must be counted, and then they must be named. Akin to the relationship that Herodotus felt with the
Spartans who died at Thermopylae, a name and story behind a victim makes the victim’s suffering more real, more tactile for the reader. For many of the victims, their suffering continues after the interaction within the report, as many have been in the hospital for weeks or months and still await potentially life-saving medical services. The numbers thus become more personal when attached to a story, a name, and an age. The work of HRW engages the deliberative motive through its access into the effects of war and the exposure of how innocent people suffer through the conflict. Further, the groups developed the inscription devices necessary to render the harsh realities of war measurable and thus contestable. Instead of the government being the center of calculation, HRW broadens the scope to a larger public that is able to act upon their documentation of the war’s violence. Once the information is released to a broader public, freed from the confines of government press releases, the deliberative motive of HRW seeks to engage the public in acknowledging the tolls of war so they are able to determine if the ends of the war, if ever delineated, could ever justify the results of the means.

**Les Roberts and the Awe-Inspiring Numbers**

A humanitarian mission drives many researchers to put their lives at risk for the sake of accurate counting. In some instances, accurate figures lead to proper distribution of humanitarian aid and food, and have even played a role in documenting war crimes. The work done by scientists, statisticians, and emergency workers has lead to a new field called conflict epidemiology. Researchers encounter serious obstacles that put their lives and the lives of their team at risk when they enter the war zones to conduct cluster sampling in face-to-face interviews. To use this method of investigation, researchers select “clusters of households that together are representative of the country as a whole, then within each cluster picking households at random.” Originally used as a public health method to check on vaccination effectiveness in
dispersed areas, cluster sampling has been put to use in counting casualties of war in the Congo, Burundi, and Sierra Leone.66

In 2004, *The Lancet* published estimations on the Iraqi death toll for the first year of the war in Iraq. *The Lancet*, one of the world’s oldest peer-reviewed medical journals, published a study lead by Les Roberts, an epidemiologist from Johns Hopkins University. Utilizing cluster sampling methodology, Roberts and his team of Iraqi researchers estimated that around 100,000 Iraqis had died during the time period from March 2003 to September 2004. The estimate of 100,000 Iraqis dead since the beginning of the war was an astonishingly high number, close to ten times higher than any other estimate at the time.67 The estimate of Iraq Body Count in October 2004 placed the number of dead between 13,000 and 15,000.68 The website run by Iraq Body Count based their estimate off media reports of deaths, a method that is likely to underestimate the real total. Included in the Roberts et al. estimate is all who have died, not only civilian causalities. The Roberts led team did not include deaths in the city of Fallujah. Fallujah had experienced a large portion of battles between coalition forces and Saddam’s fighters in the first 17 months of the war. Roberts et al. determined that due to their small sample size, Fallujah was an outlier, and thus thrown out from the initial reports. Had it been included, the total estimate would have been about 300,000.69

The Roberts study was dismissed in the popular press as nothing but an attempt to sway the election, and this was done without any regard to the methodological rigor that cluster sampling entails. Those familiar with the process would suggest that these numbers at least warrant a closer look. Roberts noted that the initial study, released five days before the 2004 election, was not timed to influence the election, per se, but he hoped that it would at least force the two presidential candidates to address the serious, yet unspoken, issue of civilian causalities in the Iraq War.70 Instead of speaking out at what appeared to be a kairotic moment, the Roberts report initially fell upon deaf ears form the presidential candidates. In an interview with Roberts
This American Life reported that the Johns Hopkins study was not mentioned on ABC, CBS or FOX on their news shows, and it garnered only 21 seconds of airtime on NBC:

Tom, thanks, and we begin here with Iraq Watch tonight and one measure of the high cost of war. A new study from Johns Hopkins University estimates that 100,000 Iraqi civilians have died since the start of the war. The majority as a result of US air strikes. This is a much larger figure than some previous estimates. The Pentagon had no comment on the number, but said it had taken great care to prevent civilian deaths. 71

The story did not make the front page of The New York Times, or any other newspaper. On NPR, Morning Edition and All things Considered devoted 45 seconds to the story. 72

Coalition leaders also dismissed the estimates. UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw dismissed The Lancet study by pointing the Iraq Minister of Health’s estimates provided on October 29, 2004. Limiting his report to civilians taken to hospitals between April 5 and October 5 2004, the Iraqi Minister of Health said that he was satisfied with the most reliable estimate that claimed, “3,853 civilians were killed and 15,517 were injured.” 73 Straw also pointed to the researcher’s own admissions to the limitations of the study, particularly the “limited precision,” which placed their estimates of dead between 8,000 and 194,000. The large range provided Straw and other critics an easy straw man, playing on the public’s lack of statistical knowledge. Simultaneously, critics attacked the methodology of estimate or aggregating up from a sample as vague compared to the precise numbers provided by the coalition-installed ministry of health.

Straw disregarded the verified methodology of cluster sampling in favor of the figures provided to the ministry by hospital, because “Hospitals in Iraq have no obvious reason to under-report the number of dead and injured.” 74 As he noted that the Roberts et al. study didn’t address the discrepancy, one could potentially infer other political motivations on the part of Roberts’ team.

The administration and mass media’s dismissal of the study draws our attention the motivation behind it. If the government engaged in a control motivation by refusing to enumerate
the civilian causalities publicly, then turns to Roberts’ team to consider their motivations. As stated above, Roberts wanted the two presidential candidates to address the issue, or at least acknowledge the toll the war had on the people of Iraq. This exemplifies a deliberative motivation. The deliberative motive seeks to engage more people and consider more viewpoints that simply what is presented. In this instance, unenumerated rhetorics left a gap in available knowledge that is critical to evaluating the progress and worth of a war. Measuring civilian casualties engages moral and practical questions. On the moral end, citizens must engage in a discussion of trade-offs. What is it worth to succeed in the war? How many civilian casualties are acceptable? The discussion becomes muddied when the topic of civilian casualties is brought to the table, because they are not often framed in the initial promotion of a war. Moral outrage may be roused for a particularly brutal leader, as one could easily call Saddam Hussein, but the enemyship does not automatically translate to the civilian population. As the Bush administration focused on the horrors of Hussein’s regime, or its initial pursuit of the al Qaeda in Afghanistan, it made an effort to distinguish between the people in the country and their leaders. The move lessens our expectations of civilian casualties. It is only when a group puts for the effort to count the number and place it in front of the public that most would begin to evaluate the costs of the war on the terms of civilians killed. Nancy Sherman, a philosophy professor at Georgetown University and who has taught ethics classes at the US Naval Academy, says that once you include the number of civilians killed in a discussion “the trade-offs don’t start looking so good.” The deliberative motive can foster this moral debate by producing estimates of civilian casualties to the forefront. The practical questions involve who will do the counting (e.g., governments, NGOs, international bodies like the UN or World Health Organization, etc.) as well as how the count will be conducted.

The biggest criticism that the original study encountered was centered on the methodology. In the study published in *Lancet*, Roberts et al. used the rigorous, and quite
dangerous, cluster sampling method to arrive at what they discern is the most accurate casualty figure. Cluster sampling can be dangerous because the surveying is being conducted in an active warzone, and the Iraqi investigators were exposed to “police interrogations, and the risk of being associated with foreign investigators.” The researchers randomly generated 33 clusters throughout Iraq’s 18 governorates, wherein each cluster the researchers would interview 30 households. By the design, the surveys would reach and represent 1/33 of the Iraqi population, or 739,000 people. Only five percent of the selected households refused to be interviewed, and 81 percent of the households that reported deaths were able to produce death certificates. Even with these assurances, the confidence interval for the 2004 report produced the wide range of potential deaths between 8,000 and 194,000. Commentators not well versed in statistical methodology could dismiss the numbers if they thought that it was just as likely that 8,000 Iraqis had died as it was that 140,000 had died. In fact, the statistical model with a 95% confidence interval meant that there was only a 2.5 percent chance the number was below 8,000, and there was a 90 percent chance that it was greater than 44,000. To counter the criticisms of their 2004 study, Roberts and his team of researchers reduced the confidence interval in 2006 by nearly doubling the houses visited (1,850 households total in 2006, compared to the first study’s total of 988) and increasing the number of clusters to 50. The results produced an even more astounding estimate that 654,695 Iraqis had died from March 2003 through June 2006 than would have been expected based off pre-invasion crude mortality figures. The report stated that over 601,000 of the deaths were due to violent causes. The 2006 confidence interval produced a range of violent deaths between 426,369 and 793,663 Iraqis killed.

The researchers defended their figure, as well as their methodology, in the results section of the 2006 study. The report noted that the 2006 figure was much higher than other passive surveillance measures, like those used by Iraq Body Count, or the Iraqi Ministry of Health that Jack Straw had cited. The data from passive surveillance is rarely complete even in the most
stable conditions, the researchers reported, and it is “even less complete during conflict, when access is restricted and fatal events could be intentionally hidden.” Pointing to Bosnia as the only exception, Burnham et al., stated that in no other conflict did passive surveillance record more than 20 percent of the deaths that were measured with the population-based methods employed in the cluster sampling. More frequently, the passive surveillance and facility-based methods underestimated events by a factor of ten or more. The focus on methodology indicates the importance of transparency when a number is deployed. The 2006 *Lancet* study brings the ethos of rigorous scientific methodology to bear on conversations that concern the true costs of war on both sides. A greater trust on methodology and science is prioritized in this process. Especially in the face of such arresting numbers (over 600,000 violent deaths), there has to be a faith in the process—proven accurate in other arenas—that can support their evidence. In a society inundated with numbers, including the cost of war, such a large number was assumed by the researchers to warrant discussion. Even with the abstraction that quantification can have, the third party casualty estimates countered the other numbers constantly thrown around in discussion of the Iraq War, including the number of deaths on 9-11, or more recently, the 4000th coalition casualty in Afghanistan.

The Roberts study also exemplifies the rhetorical difficulty found in magnitude. Part of what allowed the study to be dismissed with rapidity by the press and the larger public was that it dwarfed the other any other readily available estimate of Iraqi deaths. Even by December 2005, the first time President Bush estimated the Iraqi death toll, he placed it close to 30,000, still far below the Roberts estimate from the previous year. The 2006 investigation pushed the estimated Iraqi deaths to nearly 650,000, even farther beyond the frame of reference for much of the public. The Roberts report sought to reorient the vision of the war to acknowledge potentially more destruction than the country had planned for. “Numbers are always tricky,” Sherman said, “but the massiveness of numbers does matter.” Before the Roberts’ study was published, the
coalition administrators did not engage the question of civilian casualties. On March 18, 2002, General Tommy Franks uttered perhaps the most damning quote regarding the administration’s stance on counting civilian casualties, one that received wide circulation and served as a testament to this fact that the U.S. is not forthcoming with civilian casualties. Prompted with a question in regards to civilian deaths in relation to military progress in Afghanistan, Franks responded curtly, “You know we don’t do body counts.” Echoing these sentiments, Air Force Brigadier General John Rosa, deputy director for current operations at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, "We're not counting bodies from up here."85 The administration did not even engage in the discussion, in part because it is so difficult to negotiate. Yet it was the awesome total of the Roberts study that finally prompted a response. The coalition could turn to the much lower estimates of Iraq Body Count to dismiss the possibility that over 100,000 people had died in Iraq during the first 17 months of the war. Not relying on the connection of a number and a name, Roberts’ study relied on the sheer size of the number to halt one in their tracks and consider the damage that this war is having on those living in the country.

When Roberts et al. released the 2006 study, they improved the accuracy of the figure by increasing the sample size and further solidifying their process and thus their transparency. The 2006 figure appeared just as outstanding at over 600,000 violent deaths in Iraq, though this represented 2.5 percent of the Iraqi population. To further frame the large number, the researchers cited the death tolls of past wars, including Vietnam (3 million civilians), the Democratic Republic of Congo (3.8 million), and East Timor (where 200,000 of the total population of 800,000 died). The research raised the moral and potentially legal obligations of the coalitions governments by saying it was the duty of the occupying force to provide and maintain accurate counts of those who died in their care. “There seems to be little excuse,” Roberts et al. wrote, “for occupying forces to not be able to provide precise tallies.” Citing Article 27 of the Geneva Accords, the researchers argued that it was difficult to understand how a military force could
monitor the extent to which civilians were protected “against violence without systematically
doing body counts” or at least providing some estimate of the casualties induced by their
presence. Rebuffed by the lack of any independent international bodies to take up the cause of
counting civilian casualties, Burnham et al. renewed the call in the closing paragraph of the 2006
report. “With reliable data,” they closed, “those voices that speak out for civilians trapped in
conflict might be able to lessen the tragic human cost of future wars.” The call speaks to the
concerns facing civilians in modern conflicts, as their death tolls grow greater and greater through
the 20th and into the 21st century. During the First World War one-third of casualties were
civilians, and this total rose to two-thirds in World War Two. The 2006 study of Iraqi casualties
placed the total of deaths attributable to violence at over 90 percent.

The two studies led by Les Roberts of Johns Hopkins University illustrate two
components of the deliberative motive. First, the independent researchers assume the
responsibility to count. When the government publicly denies the responsibilities or duty to count
casualties, a deliberative motive is required on the part of outside organizations to prompt
discussion of the true costs of the war. As the governments make the decisions of which targets to
strike and how many civilian casualties are acceptable in a give bombing, one may assume that
counting the casualties also falls on their shoulders. Roberts et al., raised this question in their
study, and called forth further investigations and deliberation over the number of Iraqis killed
during the war. Instead of pointing to wrongdoing on the part of soldiers, the study concluded that
violence in the war as whole contributed to a significant rise in the mortality rate for Iraqis. In
other words, the work of the deliberative motive does not necessarily require a group to place
blame on a particular side. Insurgents planting car or roadside bombs, coalition air strikes, and
gun battles within cities all took their toll on the Iraqi population. In publishing their number, the
Roberts team filled the space left by the unenumerated rhetorics of the administration.
The second component is the criterion for judging numbers. Accuracy was the initial impetus to count, and the factor that caused the researcher to risk their lives through an active and dangerous method of cluster sampling while the war escalated. For Roberts and his team, the accuracy was tightly interwoven with the second criterion of transparency. Transparency must be thought of as the process through which the accurate figure is produced. In these studies, cluster sampling was promoted as the most accurate form of counting, with its proven track record in past warzones. The passive surveillance in the methodology of Iraq Body Count or the Iraqi Ministry of Health were said to severely underestimate the total number of people killed. The 2004 study was limited in its scope and resources, and thus produced a large range in the confidence interval. This range opened the researchers up to criticism and provided critics in the government and media to quickly dismiss the figures without engaging them. The 2006 study attempted to correct for this, and produced a narrower confidence interval, one that placed estimates even on the low end of possibility over ten times higher than passive surveillance methods reported. The even larger, and statistically more reliable, number engages the third criteria and challenge of judging numbers: magnitude. At 2.5 percent of the Iraqi population, the figure of over 650,000 deaths since the beginning of the Iraq war was an unsettling figure. In this instance, the sheer size of the number, impossible to grasp in terms of the frames provided by passive surveillance, startled those encountering it, prompting reflection and rebuttal. The Roberts led team produced a number that did promote deliberation, even if their initial efforts were quickly dismissed. Another voice and another number added to the discussion of how the war progressed, and it provided another lens for how we could judge its efficacy and worth. The unbelievably large and unrecognizable number raised troubling moral questions that could never have been answered without someone providing the number.

Ian Hacking discussed the interactions between classifications of people and the people classified. He noted that those who are classified are changed, such as the evolving definition of
the deviant.\textsuperscript{91} For Hacking there is also a “change in ways that causes systems of classification be modified in turn.”\textsuperscript{92} “Naming has real effects on people,” Hacking wrote, and the changes in people have real effects on classifications.\textsuperscript{93} Naming the enemy is the first point of enmyship. This matters as the rhetorical choice to name someone foe sets in process all sorts of cultural scripts and recriminative violence. In the broad sense of the word, the work of Roberts et al., attempted to name and count an previously abstract and undefined group: those who died due to the war in Iraq. After naming and totaling their estimates from the cluster samples, the Roberts group could present their total to the world with the hope of discussing the effects the war has had on Iraq itself. As the numbers began to circulate, there was pushback from the coalition, and some ways an attempt to redefine the group. Chapter 3 discussed the Obama administration’s redefinition of the word ‘militant,’ which broadly was claimed to be any military-age male in proximity to suspected terrorists. The definition emerged in part due to higher death tolls of civilians in drone and other aerial strikes, and in turn would lower the potential for civilian casualties by re-classifying them as militants worthy of targeting. The work of Robert and the results he and his team produced reveal the power of an aggregated number that exceeds the ability to frame it. Both reports drew their power from the ability to prompt discussion and reflection over the potential of taking innocent human lives at such an astounding level. Able to relay the transparent nature of the study through a well-established methodology, Roberts and his team were able to produce what they believed to be the most accurate count of victims in the Iraq War. The process of rejecting his number would force citizens and government officials alike to seek out another number for potential victims, and hopefully in the process contemplate the massive amount of damage the war had already done.
Iraq Body Count: Methodology for Better Accuracy

With a similar purpose of counting civilian deaths in Iraq, but a different methodology and origin, researchers with the website Iraq Body Count (IBC) found the figures produced by Roberts et al., to be high. Iraq Body Count is also attuned to the criteria for judging numerical rhetorics, and engages them individually when discussing the website’s purpose. To begin, IBC is interested in accurate, exact counts. To compile their statistics, IBC crosschecks media reports of civilian casualties or bodies found with a “careful review and integration of hospital, morgue, NGO and official figures.” For the IBC, the civilian casualties are more than a number used for aggregation. As a part of their methodology, IBC includes details of the deaths, including the number of people killed, when and where the death happened. In an effort to differentiate and, in many ways, distance themselves from the Roberts-led Johns Hopkins study, IBC suggests a few things to keep in mind when visitors analyze the numbers. First, the figures produced are “not ‘estimates’” drawn from representative samples, but “actual, documented deaths.” Second, only violent deaths are included, not any normal mortalities. Third, only civilian deaths are recorded. In contrast to this last point, the 2004 Roberts study does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths, but notes that on average, at least fifty percent of the deaths they report are civilian. Finally, the group notes that their figures are “constantly updated and revised as new data comes in, and frequent consultation is advised.”

The Iraq Body Count discusses transparency and responsibility as its rationale for counting civilian deaths. Especially in light of the callous remarks from U.S. military personnel noted above regarding the lack of “body counts” for civilian deaths—the Tommy Franks quote is featured prominently front and center on the IBC homepage, the IBC notes the United States and the United Kingdom bear particular responsibility for the deaths in Iraq and that no official record exists of the death tolls. Even if the official numbers were made available, a latent distrust in
government motives necessitates a third party, independent documentation of the event. Knowledge of the human death toll, the IBC hopes, will promote a “human centered approach to the conflict.” Echoing the explanation in the *Journal of Risk Uncertainty*, the IBC says that the data produced can be used to different ends. The group allows the release of the trends and patterns it finds and believes that this information can be vital to empowering people to act to make changes in their country’s war policy.97

In search of magnitude, IBC marked the 10th anniversary of the Iraq war with a look back at the casualties left in the war’s wake. The IBC claims to have documented between 112,017 - 122,438 civilian deaths from violence between 20 March 2003 and 14 March 2013, with the margin given as they were still totaling the deaths from March 2013 at the time of publication. When combatants of all nationalities and the 11,500 additional civilians will be added after final review of the WikiLeaks release of the Iraq War Logs, the total number of documented people killed in Iraq rises to about 174,000.98 Their first move in relating the import of this number is a simple visual listing of the deaths by year, which they measure counting from 20 March–19 March each year. During the first year, IBC documented 14,007 civilian deaths, and the second year dropped to 12,001. The deaths begin an upward trend in the third year of the war (17,026) reaching their peak during the fifth and sixth year of the war. During the fourth and fifth years from March 2006 to March 2008, sectarian killings were on the rise, which added to the 52,000 civilians killed during this time (31,418 in year four and 20,930 in year five).99 These large numbers can still remain an abstraction, especially when the last four years of the war had an average of nearly 4,300 deaths. To put this figure in context, IBC noted that this total is equal to the entire number of US and coalition soldiers killed in Iraq over the entire ten-year span.100 Such maneuvers are reasonable, as the farther away the deaths are, the more difficult it is for the average citizen to feel their impact. It could also be argued that offering the total number of soldiers killed in the war reduces the impact of the number of civilians by making an equivalence,
but that may be what is required to have the number resonate with US citizens, who come into contact with military death totals far more frequently. The comparison raises the moral question of what is a foreigner’s death worth? Or, more pointedly, how many Iraqis/Afghani/Pakistanis/etc. have to die before the American public notices?

Iraq Body Count cannot take on that moral quandary alone. Making the broader public care, or even pay attention, the death tolls of civilians half a world away is an increasingly difficult task. A second method for making the sacrifices resonate with the public is accomplished through the details and demographics IBC can marshal. Only able to identify the occupations of nearly 23,600 civilians, IBC noted that they covered 700 professions. The occupation that featured the majority of the deaths were police officers, which excluding paramilitaries totaled 10,238. Also featured on this webpage were officials and public sector workers, community and religious leaders, journalists and media workers, and medics and health care workers. Yet with all their focus on documented killings over statistically valid estimates, IBC has only been able to name seven percent of the civilian dead. Each of these victims has their own page on the IBC website, but IBC admits that “he identification of the vast majority is a task for the future, one which will require much broader participation, including from within the Iraqi population.”

Each of the not-for-profit research groups promoted different reasons for counting the civilian dead, and each rhetorical act of counting has its own particular power/instrumentality problem. The Iraq Body Count website documents all of the reported civilian deaths, and added information to contextualize individual deaths, similar to the newspaper stories of U.S. soldiers killed in action. These studies promote the concrete, the material evidence of deaths to verify their numbers. Setting themselves in stark contrast to Roberts’ Lancet study, the group believes the best way to promote its anti-war cause is to use verifiable evidence. Further, they attach a story to each death. Instead of an abstraction, one can get closer to each victim, learning where they were from and how old they were. Finally, the HRW made use of counting in order to assess
when the coalition or insurgents acted without regard for innocent human life, which led to a survey of the use of cluster munitions. In these regards, the counting of civilian deaths can serve both essential and instrumental ends.

**The Bureau for Investigative Journalism: Counting the Secret Drone War**

Established in April 2010, The Bureau for Investigative Journalism (The Bureau) in an independent non-profit that “pursues journalism which is of public benefit.” Their research focuses on the “governance of public, private and third sector organizations and their influence.”103 Of particular import to this chapter, and to the efforts of those wishing to draw attention to the previously covert drone war, The Bureau conducted a major investigation into Obama’s drone campaign that has killed over 3,000 people, including over 500 citizens.

The Bureau’s in-depth reporting illustrates the interrelated nature of the criteria for judging numbers, and how that is borne in the presentation of numbers with a deliberative motive. In the challenging of the US government’s effort to fight a covert drone war, at least until the Obama administration began making oblique references to it in 2012 and more concrete admissions in 2013, the numbers needed to resonate as well as prove credible. Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia are the three countries The Bureau focused their investigations of drone attacks, and in each country they compiled datasets. These datasets first include narrative accounts of each reported action, a casualty count that includes those killed and injured, and all sources used in researching the action. Sources begin with “all news reports, statements, documents and press releases” and are sometimes corroborated with local testimony from local government officials and other researchers on the ground.104 Similar to any investigation, new data can emerge at any point, and the Bureau stated that they update their totals as new information becomes available.
The simple inclusion of strikes in Yemen and Somalia reveals the extent to which the War on Terror has move beyond the locations of major military operations like Afghanistan and Iraq. This stands as a reminder of how the broad military power granted in the Authorization of Military Force in 2001 enables the United States to engage in military operations on the periphery if the President argues that it is related to the pursuit of Al Qaeda or affiliated groups. The Bureau’s methodology for designating drone strikes and confirmed or possible dictates that when “US government source or named senior Yemeni source acknowledges a strike has been carried out by a US drone” it will be designated a “confirmed” attack.\footnote{In 2014, The Bureau’s collected data on possible and confirmed drone strikes in Yemen indicates that no confirmed US strikes have occurred, but they open the question to five possible US drone strikes. These strikes have reportedly killed between six and eleven people, including one civilian. As the US has not claimed responsibility for the attacks, The Bureau lists them as “possible,” though they note that “precision night-time strikes on moving vehicles, whilst often attributed to the Yemen Air Force, are more likely to be the work of US forces.”} In 2013, Yemen came under pressure during the Arab Spring, and militants seized control of towns in the South. In response, the US stepped up its attacks, notably with drone strikes. The Bureau reported 16 confirmed strikes killing between 61 and 99 people, including between 11 and 23 civilians. They also documented 16 or 17 possible strikes that reportedly killed between 50 and 71 people, and up to seven civilians.\footnote{In 2013, Yemen came under pressure during the Arab Spring, and militants seized control of towns in the South. In response, the US stepped up its attacks, notably with drone strikes. The Bureau reported 16 confirmed strikes killing between 61 and 99 people, including between 11 and 23 civilians. They also documented 16 or 17 possible strikes that reportedly killed between 50 and 71 people, and up to seven civilians.}

The drone strikes in Yemen indicate how the tactic of drone warfare can proliferate quickly, and be relatively effective. The effectiveness of many drone strikes is not the sole question being prompted by the documentation of these efforts, particularly in Yemen. The counting by The Bureau, in lieu of a number by the US government, gestures toward the decentralized nature of the drone program. As the US carries out attacks under the guise of Yemeni military operations, the ownership for the program is displaced or pushed farther away from the one carrying out the attacks. The Bureau’s delineation between confirmed attacks, ones
that are claimed by the US, compared to possible attacks, which have some corroboration that the US was involved, reveals the slippery nature of the remote warfare. While the Obama administration can rest on the effectiveness of the drones in remote areas, they will soon have to contend with other nations operating weaponized drones without a legal framework. Over 70 countries possessed drone aircrafts by October 2012, though only a few nations operated drones capable of carry arms.\textsuperscript{108} The work of The Bureau to document the drone strikes in Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan also reflects the way in which their counting is inherently territorializing. First, it does so by making the physical spaces and persons calculable. Individual bodies are counted and given a presence that is abstracted in reports of missile strikes. Second, it participates in making the abstract spaces and groups calculable. The government has never defined the broad nature of the War on Terror, its endless proliferation, and even its ends less goals. In documenting the locations of attacks, The Bureau is able to make present abstract concepts like “associated groups” of al Qaeda in order to make them concrete and able to be analyzed.

The act of counting drone strikes carried out by the United States reflects a humanitarian purpose, but the very act can teeter on the verge of the impersonal. Accounting numbers can configure “persons, domains, and actions as objective and comparable,” flattening the meaning of the lives lived.\textsuperscript{109} Such a move renders them governable. While the US government refuses to enumerate those killed by drones and in expanding battlefields of the endless war, they do count and make “objective” judgments regarding the worth of a target. The 30:1 ratio that determined if it was worthwhile to carry out a strike on a single target so long as fewer than 30 civilians were killed reflects this objective calculation of the worth of a human life. Throughout his examination in \textit{Homo Sacer}, Agamben places homo sacer, or sacred man, as the protagonist. The notion of a sacred man is one who may be killed, yet not sacrificed. While the roots of the sacred man concept are ancient, Agamben demonstrates that homo sacer is integral to modern conceptions of political power, including who will be included and who will be excluded from the rights of
citizenship. The act of counting drone victims seeks to disrupt the anonymity and further complicate the notion that one life is worth more than thirty, as well as the rationalized and dehumanized notions of the ratio itself.

Even as the antiwar groups tally up their numbers to astounding totals and promote their figure’s accuracy and their method’s transparency, they navigate a fine line between the same objectification of life, abstraction in the form of a tally, and a subjective or more humanitarian task. It is only through a standardized form of accounting that they are accorded a particular form of visibility in the first place. In other words, the act of counting the war dead creates “distinctive possibilities for intervention while potentially displacing others.”

The counting work of the antiwar groups can show the potential that standardized methods of accounting can offer individuals who are always already abstracted by the government. To accomplish this task, the groups must provide innovate methods of filling out the abstracted number, giving it meaning in the place of the calculating state. The very act of counting the war dead challenges the sometimes-stated notion that it is impossible to do body counts when actively engaged in a war zone. The challenge to the state then becomes a site of invention for the antiwar groups as they count the dead and seek to make their lives mean something to audiences far removed.

The theoretical work in this chapter is influenced by Foucault’s concept of governmentality. In examining the work of antiwar groups to count the war dead, some of same structures of power and knowledge that state uses to count and govern are used by those outside the government to challenge the notions and accounts of how the war is being fought. As Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose noted, the work of Foucault opens a new mode of investigation into “the who and what one should study in the critical investigation of the relations of knowledge, authority and subjectivity in our present.” As numbers have grown increasingly integral to the way in which democracy is “justified and operationalized as a particular set of mechanisms of
rule,” the work deliberative motive of the antiwar groups numerical rhetorics pushes back against practices that have deemed those who die in a war are not worth counting.\textsuperscript{112}

\textbf{Counting and Debating the Costs of War}

There are rhetorical judgments implicit with the decision of whether or not to count something. Similarly, there are judgments that determine how someone is named. In the instance of civilian deaths, it remains difficult for many to grasp the destruction that accompanies war when it affects people and communities on the other side of the world. In the absence of an official statistic regarding civilian casualties, we must rely on different non-governmental institutions to provide that information. In each example, we see different ways in which counting can have an impact in how we think about war and could provide evidence that a shift in policy needs to take place. The worth of Iraq Body Count, with the pairing of deaths with a newspaper report of the death, mirrors the experience of counting the military dead—there is a name, a place, and a story that humanizes the victim. Even without the background, the work of Les Roberts and his results in the \textit{Lancet} study reveal the impact that aggregated numbers can have on our evaluations of the war. When one compares the tally of coalition casualties to his report of over 600,000 civilian casualties during the first three years of the war in Iraq, the expected magnitude of this number could cause a civilian to contemplate the totality of the war effort.

The deliberative motive of antiwar groups, with their disparate estimates, methods, and rationales, attempt to change the way we interact with the world. William Alonzo and Paul Starr theorized that numbers or “statistics are the lenses through which we form images of society.”\textsuperscript{113} The deliberative motive is frequently raised against the power of the state, challenging the findings and presuppositions that guide the deployments of the government’s use of numerical rhetorics. In the offering of a counter number, or marshaling a number where the government
previously had remained silent, the antiwar groups face the uphill task of reshaping our images of society against the grain of the powerful mechanisms at the government’s disposal. To accomplish this task, the antiwar groups engage closely the criteria for judging numerical rhetorics: accuracy, transparency, and magnitude. In their deployment of numerical rhetorics, we see the close interaction of the different criteria, where no one dominates. When Les Roberts produced the estimate that over 601,000 Iraqi civilians were likely to have died during the first three years of the war, he and his researchers faced attacks on all fronts. First, the number was an estimate, and it had a range of possible results (the confidence interval). The process used to derive the number was Robert’s nod to transparency. Cluster sampling was a highly regarded methodology that Roberts excelled at, even getting quoted by Colin Powell for his reports on civilian deaths in Kosovo. The largest problem for the Roberts team was dealing the magnitude criterion. Instead of drawing comparisons with how many American or coalition soldiers had died, the researchers let the giant number stand alone, in stark contrast to the estimates of Iraq Body Count, or the limited numbers offered by the US government. In this instance the distance between the two estimates provoked discussion, and even a response from the coalition. In this way, the deliberative motive of deploying this number had an effect, and it could also promote the positive impact that reflecting upon numbers can have. The deliberative motive, exercised by the antiwar groups can challenge self-perceptions on important and fundamental issues such as the moral good in fighting a war.

Room should be made for an ethical discussion that weighs the costs and the benefits of a military incursion into a foreign country, especially when the rationalizations for war remain unproven. For me, this discussion must begin with the question, “Why war?” Only after it is determined that the war is the most ethical and effective course can we discuss how many causalities are acceptable, and what our metrics of success are. *This American Life* producer Alex
Blumberg presents limited internal dialogue that could have helped us debate the ethical decision for war, but still allowed the sovereign mentality to carry on. He closed the episode by saying,

The moral logic of war is this: we’re willing to undergo X number of costs in lives, money and resources to accomplish some goal. The goal we hope will be worth it in the end. So assuming the goal in Iraq is good, is it wrong to kill 100,000 civilians? Saddam himself probably killed 230,000 of his own people (a number, by the way, nobody seems to go out of their way to dispute). If you add the million or so lives lost in the futile war with Iran, 100,000 seems like a bargain in comparison. Maybe he would have gone on another killing spree, and this 100,000 is an insurance policy against a later, far worse death toll. Or maybe 100,000 is worth it if democracy does take hold and blossom in the Middle East. … If we don’t count civilian casualties, we don’t have to get into this horrible math.

The continued state of exception, now becoming a permanent reality, has had dire consequences for the respectful acknowledgement of rights and livelihood of citizens around the world. Perhaps even more troubling has been the internalization of the sovereign’s logic into the mind of the American citizen. As the media keeps the war at a distance, limiting our interactions with our fellow global citizens, it is easy to believe this process will continue unabated. There appears to be hope if the citizens of this country, or the next superpower, are introduced the real impacts of their country’s military adventures. A much-needed discussion of impacts may be prompted by accurate reports of not only our soldiers’ deaths, but of the innocent lives taken with them. The process of counting does not have to remain the tool of military memoirs to flatten history and control the past. A number, a name, a face—side-by-side with a fallen soldier—could quickly bring the war home, and perhaps then we will be ready to have a serious ethical discussion. But for this discussion to take place, we must first develop an understanding of the rhetorical act of counting and how integral it is to the justification, and prosecution, of war.

Obama, First Inaugural Address. Following his statement, Obama was quick to assert, “And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken -- you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.” There is only so much humility when one is President of the United States and when one wades through American Exceptionalism like his 43 predecessors.


Smith, Rondeaux and Warrick, “2 U.S. Airstrikes Offer a Concrete Sign of Obama’s Pakistan Policy.”

Smith, Rondeaux and Warrick, “2 U.S. Airstrikes Offer a Concrete Sign of Obama’s Pakistan Policy.”


Obama, First Inaugural Address.
10 Smith, Rondeaux and Warrick, “2 U.S. Airstrikes Offer a Concrete Sign of Obama’s Pakistan Policy.”

11 Serle, “More than 2,400 Dead as Obama’s Drone Campaign Marks Five Years.”


16 Joris Verhulst, “February 15, 2003: The World Says No to War,” in The World Says No to War: Demonstrations Against the War on Iraq, ed. Stefaan Walgrave and Dieter Rucht (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 17. The base total of 11 million people is derived from the total of protestors estimated in the largest protests around the world including protests in the capitals of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States. The figures are likely higher than these estimates due to the large number of smaller protests not estimated in this book, including protests in almost every state capital of the United States.


23 Jennifer Barrett, “Powell Made His Case,” *Newsweek*, February 8, 2003, Web Exclusive edition. As David Zarefsky notes, “On the various themes developed in the speech, 69 percent thought the presentation was very or somewhat convincing in its argument that Iraq had been hiding banned weapons from the UN inspectors; 60 percent, in the argument that Iraq was actively supporting al Qaeda terrorists; and 62 percent, that Saddam Hussein posed “an immediate danger to the world.” See David. Zarefsky, “Making the Case for War: Colin Powell at the United Nations,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10 (2007), 295.


30 Epstein, “Notes on the Antiwar Movement.”


For a historical look at antiwar protests in the United States, see Lyn Smith, Voices Against War:


33 Geyer, “Silent March.” A group of Quakers protested outside of the gates of campus here at Penn State every week while we were fighting in Iraq. Their quiet and constant protests served as a reminder that the country was still at war, long after it fade from the headlines.

34 Andrea Mennicken and Peter Miller, “Accounting, Territorialization and Power,” Foucault Studies, no. 13 (2012), 20. Mennicken and Miller are specifically referring to accounting when they make this claim, but the way they build off the notions of assemblages through Deleuze broadens the concept to include wider forces of counting.


36 Charles H. Ferguson, No End in Sight: Iraq’s Descent into Chaos (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2008), 9. For the soldiers, the cards were small, portable, durable, and would be used in other circumstances, unlike something like flipcharts with the same information. The DoD said that their “added entertainment function provides incentive for soldiers to keep reviewing the names and images,” and provide soldiers with potential coded language in case others were listening. See also Peter Valdes-Dapena, “Hot Item: ‘Most Wanted Iraqi’ Cards,” CNN, April 16, 2003, http://money.cnn.com/2003/04/14/pf/saving/iraq_cards/.


41 The Helsinki Accords included clauses on the inviolability of national frontiers and respect for territorial integrity. The agreement also included a statement that signing countries would “refrain from any intervention, direct or indirect, individual or collective, in the internal or external affairs falling within the domestic jurisdiction of another participating State, regardless of their mutual relations.” “The Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Declaration),” August 1, 1975, http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/osce/basics/finact75.htm.


43 Human Rights Watch, “Our History.”

44 Human Rights Watch, “Our History.”


46 Human Rights Watch, “Our History.”


56 Human Rights Watch, “Off Target,” 7. HRW reports that near the village of Karbala’, a Marine explosive ordinance disposal team was responsible for clearing 4,000 duds in a single month (104).


Roberts et al., “Mortality Before and After,” 1861. This data was dismissed because the 200,000 deaths in Fallujah would represent nearly 2/3rds of the entire city’s population.


Straw, Iraq (Casualty Estimates).

Roberts et al., “Mortality Before and After,” 1862. Respondents were asked for the death certificates at the end of the interviews so that respondents would not know confirmation would be sought as they reported deaths. Additionally, researchers were initially hesitant to ask
for the certificates for fear that it would imply they did not believe the respondent, as well as a fear of triggering violence.

79 This American Life, What’s in a Number?, 2005.


81 Burnham et al., “Mortality after the 2003 Invasion,” 1426.

82 Burnham et al., “Mortality after the 2003 Invasion,” 1426.

83 Burnham et al., “Mortality After the 2003 Invasion,” 1421.

84 This American Life, What’s in a Number?, 2005.


86 Roberts et al., “Mortality Before and After,” 1863.

87 Burnham et al., “Mortality After the 2003 Invasion,” 1428.


89 The more exact figure is 92.3%, which is derived from taking the 601,000 violent deaths divided by the 650,000 estimated total deaths.

90 Roberts et al., “Mortality Before and After,” 1863. The estimate for US soldier’s killing civilians with small arms fire is low, around 5%. The researchers report that the soldiers apologized to the families, “indicating a clear understanding of the adverse consequences of their use of force.”
In discussing the over 4,000 motives for murder, or police categorization of suicides into 21 different classifications, Hacking notes, “I do not believe that motives of these sorts or suicides of these kinds existed until the practice of counting them came into being.” Ian Hacking, “Making Up People,” in Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought, ed. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 161.


Hacking, “Between Foucault and Goffman,” 279.


95 This American Life, What’s In A Number? — 2006 Edition.


99 Iraq Body Count, “The War in Iraq: 10 Years and Counting.”

IBC cites icasualties.org, a website which counts military deaths. The icasualties website placed the ten-year total at 4,804.

100 Iraq Body Count, “The War in Iraq: 10 Years and Counting.”

101 Iraq Body Count, “The War in Iraq: 10 Years and Counting.”

102 Iraq Body Count, “The War in Iraq: 10 Years and Counting.”


The Bureau, “Our Methodology.” All other attacks not confirmed by US or Yemeni officials, local politicians, or eye witnesses is considered a “possible” drone strike.


Mennicken and Miller, “Accounting, Territorialization and Power.” 18.


This American Life, What’s In A Number? — 2006 Edition.
Conclusion

How to Account for Numbers in War

There's an old saying in Tennessee -- I know it's in Texas, probably in Tennessee -- that says, fool me once, shame on -- shame on you. Fool me -- you can't get fooled again.

-George W. Bush

“Numbers,” writes theorist Nikolas Rose, “have an unmistakable power in modern political culture.” As we move about our daily lives, we encounter numbers everywhere: what time the bus arrives at Allen gate, the correct calculation for 18% tip when dining out, the refresh rate on our new LED television, and the percentage Newt Gingrich performed above our expectations. Some are mundane, but others are crucial to the functioning of our democracy. Yet, most times, we pass them over just as quickly as factoring our miles per gallon when we fill up our cars. The ability, and even the necessity to make these calculations, is not endemic to democracy itself, but instead came around the time of the industrial revolution and the formation of nation states.

The growth of government-gathered numbers, what Ian Hacking refers to as the "avalanche of printed numbers," occurred in the early 19th century. The two chief purposes of governmental enumeration of taxation and military recruitment were both borne out during the American Civil War, and we have seen their use and power change over the intervening years. For more than the last 200 years, we have seen numbers increasing in circulation, and their power of representation has impacted the ways in which we view the world on a daily basis. This dissertation investigated how the flood of numbers has been used in war rhetoric, both in the promotion of and arguments against involvement. Focused primarily on the American experience beginning in the Civil War and ending in the current War on Terror, this dissertation traced the
three main motivations for using numbers: commemoration, control, and deliberation. It is far too easy to see these categories as mutually exclusive, and convenient to claim that a rhetor prioritizes one at the expense of another. My effort to lay out these categories did not intend for this. Instead, the categorization of motives sought to understand the motives of their use in terms of accounts, or “linguistic devices that function to explain, justify, interpret, or rationalize action,” an understanding that allows for multiple motives to operate simultaneously. The words and actions that follow these numbers have important implications for the democratic decision to go to war.

Examining how numbers are rhetorically deployed during war, I highlighted how the changing situations demanded new innovations in the use of numbers, and sometimes facilitated different motivations. Further, this dissertation investigated the ways in which deliberation can be stifled by the use of numbers; at the same time, I’ve shown that numbers, if they are brought to the public, can prompt citizens to deliberate about the costs of war. Together, the four chapters in this dissertation provide an outline for the power that numbers have in American war rhetoric. The long-term examination reveals ways in which the American public is related to in terms of the deployment of numbers, and how welcomed they are to engage these numbers. Individually, each case study selected for this dissertation offers and opportunity to examine the rhetorical function of numbers as a purposive response to a deliberative situation. As each of these four chapters takes aim at different wars and even different sides of debate, we see the ability to rhetorically harness numbers can generate support and assent to war, attempt to silence deliberation regarding the causes of the war or a proper response, or even counter claims made by the government, thus provoking thoughts about the moral implications of war. Numbers are an inventionial resource whose power we tap on a daily basis, and through these chapters we see a glimpse into the different ends to which they can be used.
At the start of the Civil War, neither side could imagine that the battle would be so protracted, using so many resources, and taking so many lives. The North was “superior in every industrial resource,” while the South was certain of “its superiority of its human resources on the field of battle.”

President Abraham Lincoln believed the rebellion could be put down quickly and began recruiting Union soldiers for 90 days. This war would not end quickly, and each side of the battle suffered massive causalities that would change how Americans viewed war and how the government responded to a nation at war. David Zarefsky notes that the war transformed the country from a “loose confederation of states engaged in an experiment to a nation with a strong central government.”

The stronger central government was a response to the massive death tolls that both sides experienced, as the nation yearned for a way to remember the fallen soldiers, but also the nation’s efforts to come to terms with the sacrifice that each soldier gave for his respective side. Lincoln’s creation of the National Cemetery System beginning in 1862 showcased an example of the commemorative motive of numbers. The government’s massive effort to first count, then rebury, and, in some cases, name the dead through the bureaucratic process of the National Cemetery System transformed the way in which citizens were to think of the dead. No longer was death a private matter for the family. Instead, a soldier’s death serving the state required the government to carefully note their losses, and it was the duty of their fellow citizens then to take up the task of preserving the union.

The commemorative motive during the Civil War also reflected the biopolitical nature of the nation’s dedicated mission honor and account for its fallen soldiers. War drove the growth of biopolitical concerns just as it drove the growth of numbers in the United States. A century before the Civil War, states began to focus on measurable processes like birth rate, mortality rate and longevity. The process of counting had begun in earnest in the 18th century, but the Civil War provided a new context in which the state was able to use the growing pile of numbers to create a new form of knowledge and thus manifest it through an exercise of power. In his *The History of*
Sexuality, Vol 1, Foucault writes that since the 19th century wars were fought on behalf of the existence of everyone. The technological advancements of weapons and the development of nation-states facilitated a move where “entire populations are mobilized for the wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity.” Both the Union and the Confederacy mobilized their populations, carefully counting and eventually drafting millions to take up arms against their fellow countryman. To further this effort, the relationship of citizens to death had to change. Now that these deaths were taking place far away from their families, the dying sought new meaning for their sacrifice. The counting and reburial of the mass casualties was an attempt by the government to harness the power of the deaths, deaths they facilitated, by molding a mode of citizenship based around the post-Revolutionary War contract of blood. Akin to the effort post-Revolution, the Civil War blood oath produced a disciplinary function, where the act of sacrificing one’s self for the nation became a part of citizenship, this time explicitly for the future of the union.

The wars of the 20th century provide us a study in how the use of numbers shifted from the First World War through Vietnam and the Cold War. This chapter revealed the increasing power in the use of numbers, as the main uses gravitate away from a primarily commemorative motive and showcased the different ways in which the government uses numbers with a motive of control to limit democratic deliberation. The First World War mirrored the commemorative motives of the American Civil War, and the European countries had a similarly difficult task of counting, burying, and memorializing the massive casualties. Following the war, Walter Lippmann and John Dewey debated the meaning of democracy, and more particularly the role that individual citizens should play in the process. The increased role played by experts, favored by Lippmann, highlighted the motive of control that would continue to develop through the rest of the century, as states sought to maintain the upper hand in discussions by controlling information and dictating the flow of numbers. The Cold War and Vietnam featured the
promotion of the scientist or quantitative mind as the savior, prioritizing the calculations of equations over other forms of evidence, thus decreasing the efficacy of citizens to understand and engage the debate around these wars. This process occurred even within the military after the appointment of Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defense. McNamara’s running of the Department of Defense was premised on his quantitative mind, foregrounding rationalized decisions and calculating inputs and outputs. The focus on numerical results, including the importance of achieving a specific daily body count, exemplified the power that numbers had in dictating actions. This narrow focus on numbers also contributed to some of the worst atrocities of war, as prioritizing an output strained soldiers up and down the command chain and further isolated the ethical and moral ends of their actions from their minds.

The motives of commemoration and control in the 20th century wars are closely related to the logics of biopolitics. For the commemorative motive, there is the biopolitical tactic of encouraging citizens to think in terms of symbolic structures and cultural patterns that help produce meaning, a process witnessed in the memorializing of soldiers after WWI. Tied closely with this are the government’s arguments that linked the memorials of the dead with continuing the fight under the auspice of the promotion of life, or the war to end all wars, while the governments are continuing to produce weapons that are capable of taking life with great efficiency. During the Cold War, the use of experts, or even secret information like the purported missile gap, connects the motive of control with biopolitics through the construction of hierarchies and relations of domination that citizens experience in their daily lives. John F. Kennedy used the classified and erroneous counts of the missile gap between the Soviet Union and the United States to impale the work of Eisenhower and create a space for his plan. The threats of nuclear destruction that circulated during the Cold War isolated the public further from decision-making, as a certain class of people with governmental ties had access to the precise details of nuclear capabilities and destructive power of the weapons. Instead of an effort to
engage the public, much of the rhetoric of the Cold War relied on fear and secrecy, building the
hierarchy that the government is the body to trust, because they control the information and
research. McNamara’s quantitative rationality is also reflective of a biopolitical mode of thinking,
one which seeks to count, calculate, and hierarchize potential battle plans. By building up
numerical calculations and relying on a formal rationality, the United States institutionalized a
formal rationality that distanced those making decisions from the consequences of said decisions.
Breaking down complex issues, economies and lives into “comparable and objectifiable chunks”
facilitated this action at a distance, allowing for decisions to be made without an intimacy of how
everyday life is organized there.9

The War on Terror that began after the September 11, 2001 attacks was a different war,
and thus brought forth different iterations of the control and commemorative motives. The first
difference was the response by the United States to the terror attack. Instead of engaging in
smaller, surgical strikes against the terrorist group responsible, or moving in a more police action
framework, the Bush administration launched an expansive and seemingly endless, even end-
less, war. The process of enemyship remained in tact, with the first move to name an enemy in al
Qaeda, but this enemy was different from any before. It was not bound by traditional national
boundaries, and its leadership structure facilitated a disparate network of associated groups.
President Bush relied heavily on a commemorative motive in discussing the War on Terror,
frequently reminding the public of the attacks on 9/11, and even standing in for the public in the
speeches immediately following the attacks.10 His use of mundane and vague numbers presented
a need to develop an apparatus for judging numerical rhetorics through three criteria: accuracy,
transparency, and magnitude. The overlapping criteria provide a means by which the public can
analyze the use of numbers, with the potential to cut through the motives of control and
commemoration that seek to cut off democratic deliberation over the decision surrounding a
country’s engagement in war.
President Obama entered office amidst two wars launched by his predecessor, and escalated a secret drone war that was nascent under President Bush. The changing nature of the battlefield and the increased drone strikes increases the odds and moral complexities of real problems with regard to acceptable levels of civilian casualties in conflicts that are ongoing today and likely to be imagined tomorrow. The Obama administration acknowledged the moral elements of the drone war, attempting to frame the President as bearing the moral burden for making the decision whether or not to take a life. This discussion of the “kill list,” bound up in an explanation through just war doctrines, also can be explored through a discussion of the changing nature of biopower. Giorgio Agamben writes that the modern state has begun placing biological life at the center of its calculations. Central to this, for Agamben, is homo sacer, or sacred man, who may be killed by not sacrificed. The concept of homo sacer can be used to investigate the moral implications of counting casualties of war, particularly because of the ambiguous nature of the concept and issues of sovereignty. For the Obama administration, the discussion of the value of human life hinges frequently on the distinction between a verified, targeted militant and innocent civilian casualties, though the case becomes more complicated when the question of American drone victims is broached. The Obama administration sought to quell dissent over the drone program, and even the possibility of targeting Americans, through the revelation of four Americans already killed in drone strikes. Deploying the four names, only three of which were previously reported, the administration attempted to reestablish the state as in control of the accurate and important numbers. The disclosure began to push the burden of proof back to the critics, knowing that with a passive, cynical and acquiescent public, the state can rest easy and in control.

The final chapter analyzed the ways in which four different case studies of anti-war groups and their use of numbers. In their use of numbers, anti-war groups utilized commemoration and control, but largely represented a deliberative motive, one that is frequently
oriented against the power of the state, with a purpose of raising questions about the costs of war, as well as challenging the findings and presuppositions that guide the government’s use of numerical rhetorics. The deliberative motive seeks to uncover hidden or rarely discussed numbers, attempting to move the war debate into the realm of democratic deliberation. The deliberative motive reflects John Dewey’s belief that with the right type of presentation, even the most technical and high-brow presentation can be understood by the public, and thus it is the job of democratic activists to re-engage citizens in important matters of public debate. To enlist the public, as well as counter the claims by the US or coalition governments, the anti-war groups utilized the three criteria for judging numerical rhetorics when making their case. The drive for accuracy is fundamental for these groups, as the US refused to numerate the civilian casualties at war. Les Roberts and the website Iraq Body Count both took up this cause, though they arrived at different totals. These differences were facilitated by their methodology, which was part of the transparency of their numbers. Both Roberts et al. and Iraq Body Count argued that their methodology represented the means to achieve the most accurate total. Instead of negotiating a resolution, this chapter focused on the deliberative motive represented by these groups, countering government totals and pushing for response or acknowledgment of the deaths. In order to make the numbers meaningful, anti-war groups also had to engage with a number’s magnitude. In his discussion of how rhetoric is the art of making things matter, Thomas Farrell argues the “single most frequently recurring commonplace is that of quantity, degree, largess, magnitude.” The Aristotelian understanding of magnitude requires that a rhetor strike a balance in how to compose a description of an object, bringing it within the frame of reference for the audience. The Roberts case study also revealed that one could use magnitude without placing the number within a full frame of reference for the audience. Instead, Roberts’ investigations used massive, awe-inspiring numbers that could stop the listener in their tracks, and provoke reflection over the
possibility that the war could have brought forth such destruction, even if the government never offered a similar number.

One of the greatest fears in relying too heavily on numbers to represent a human life is the level of abstraction that numbers imposes, as well as the perverse consequences that can be engendered by such rhetoric. James Dawes notes that part of the epistemology of war, counting, with its “mundane and innumerable calculations,” can fall victim to being a mathematical contest, a “type of war by algebra,” as Clausewitz called it.\textsuperscript{12} We can see the difference when we look at the ways in which the anti-war groups presented their counts in hopes of promoting further deliberation over the costs of war. Human Rights Watch (HRW), a group dedicated to investigating potential violations of international human right law, demonstrated that one could count and not abstract out an identity. Far from an abstraction, HRW’s investigation of cluster bombs increased the chance of resonating with readers through detailed stories that included the names, ages, and sometimes pictures of victims in Iraq. HRW used \textit{enargia}, or a vivid description that can be inherently moving, to amplify the narratives to an emotional end. The stories also showcase the two-step process for respecting and acknowledging the suffering of victims: first they must be counted, and then they must be named, a lesson that goes as far back has Herodotus and his history of the Spartans who died at Thermopylae. In a similar vein, the work of the \textit{Bureau for Investigative Journalism} in the documenting of victims of America’s drone war demonstrated an anti-war groups ability harness statistics, traditionally a technology of governance used by the state since the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, to challenge the state’s claims and their formulation of knowledge/power. The de-centering of the location of the knowledge/power, in this instance when it comes to counting victims of drone attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen, begins to shift the ability that the state has to control information, particularly when it comes to victims of war.
Nikolas Rose argues that there is a “constitutive interrelationship between quantification and democratic government.” His development mirrors Foucault’s discussion of information, knowledge, and power. Rose continues:

Democratic power is calculated power, and numbers, are intrinsic to the forms of justification that give legitimacy to political power in democracies. Democratic power is calculating power, and numbers are integral to the technologies that seek to give effect to democracy as a particular set of mechanisms of rule. Democratic power requires citizens who calculate about power, and numeracy and a numericized space of public discourse are essential for making up self-controlling democratic citizens.

Numbers, thus, continue to play a large role in the functioning of our democracy, and, increasingly still, a large role in the way we think about our lives as citizens and consumers. It is thus imperative that we recognize the rhetorical judgments that are implicit in the decision of whether or not to count something. As the things we measure and how we define the categories shape our thoughts and conceptions of ourselves, we must also understand the implications of what happens when we do not count, or are not presented with the option. To go blindly to war, motivated by revenge, the memory of three thousand people needlessly killed, or extension of an empire under such guises, hinders our ability to evaluate the worth of war.

We must learn to ask the tough questions both ourselves, and our leaders, when we are debating the possibility of war. What will be the cost, both human and financial? How do we relate to it and understand it? How much are citizens being asked to commit? What is the end goal, or what does victory look like? War is powerful and the results are difficult to control. This dissertation argued that numbers, and the motives associated with their deployment, are a rhetorical tool that can be used to limit deliberation, as well as broaden its reach. A better understanding of the motives can prepare citizens to fully engage the difficult questions and decisions to go to war, all in the hopes of not being fooled again.


4 William Benoit, “A Note on Burke on ‘Motive’,” Rhetoric Society Quarterly 26, no. 2 (April 1, 1996), 70. Benoit’s definition derives from C. Wright Mills’ “Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive.” In this piece, Mills writes that motives are words and he believes that “they do not denote any elements ‘in’ individuals.” C. Wright Mills, “Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive,” American Sociological Review 5 (1940), 904.


7 David Zarefsky. "Rhetorical Interpretations of the American Civil War." Quarterly Journal of Speech 81, no. 1 (1995), 108. Zarefsky expands upon the change in the nation saying, “In matters of economics, politics, society and culture, the Civil War is an epochal transition: the time after is fundamentally different from the time before.”


13 Rose, “Governing by Numbers,” 675.

14 Rose, “Governing by Numbers,” 675.
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