Mary L. Dudziak
Fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford University
Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Law and Director, Project on War and Security in
Law, Culture and Society, Emory University

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Note to readers:

Although I have a number of new papers, I would like to talk with you at my
workshop about something yet to be written. During my leave this year, I will be
working on a book: *Going to War: An American History*. The book will examine the
atrophy of political checks on presidential war power, going beyond the traditional
focus on the relationship between the president and Congress. Changes in the
military and in warfare matter in my account, including the absence of a draft, the
greatly increased reliance on military contractors, and technological change. Another
layer is the role of national security statebuilding, as war (called "defense" after
1947) was entrenched in the federal bureaucracy.   In addition, a permanent
post-1945 arms industry not only made war a part of the American economy; the
arms industry became a political force. Finally, in my last book, *War Time: An Idea,
Its History, Its Consequences*, I explored an aspect of the cultural history of
American war: the way ideas about American war are informed by ideas about time.
The very concept of "wartime" suggests that war is a breach of normal time, and
enables the assumption that war is temporary/exceptional, when instead U.S.
military engagement has been ongoing.

As I began to plan this year's work, it seemed to me that there is a conceptual puzzle
I had not paid serious enough attention to. The puzzle is the relationship between the
broader political and structural story, and the very activity of war itself: killing and
dying. What follows is not a paper, but simply some notes on how I plan to start
thinking about this.

Death and the War Power

War is a broad concept. For Clausewitz it is the use of force to get the enemy to do
your will. At the heart of military conflict, however, is something very specific: the
production of dead people. Exposure to the production and management of war
death, or the "work of death" in war, was inescapable for Americans during the Civil
War, Drew Gilpin Faust shows. Proximity to the dead, dying and injured
transformed the United States, creating "a veritable 'republic of suffering' in the
words [of] Frederick Law Olmsted."[1] Shared experience with death helped constitute

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[1] Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*
(2009).

American identity.

During the 20th century, the United States became a major global military power, and the nation became a homefront, secured against external dangers, even as war fighting happened, almost exclusively, outside national boundaries. In December 1941, for example, the U.S. declared war on Japan after Japanese surprise attacks throughout the Pacific, including the bombing of an unknown harbor in the faraway U.S. territory of Hawai'i. Emily Rosenberg shows the way Pearl Harbor came to be seen as an iconic American space (in what did not become the 50th state until 1959).[2] President Roosevelt began the process of narrating Pearl Harbor as part of America. Because of the draft and widespread domestic participation in war-related work, Americans were deeply affected by that war and its losses.[3] Still, the "work of death" would not so deeply permeate the national experience simply because the dying happened far away.

Since World War II, war's carnage has become more distant. The Korean War did not generate a republic of suffering in the United States. Instead, as Susan Brewer has shown, Americans had to be persuaded that Korea should matter to them.[4] During the war in Vietnam, war came into American households through network television. Drafted soldiers shared the experience of death and dying. For most others, war death was presented in body counts on the evening news.[5]

By the late 20th century, war service was no longer a requirement of male citizenship, and military strength could be maximized without requiring massive deployment of U.S. soldiers through increased outsourcing and advanced technologies. In this context, American presidents of both parties sometimes committed U.S. forces to military conflicts without congressional authorization. And when they asked for it, broad power was authorized.

If war and suffering played a role in constituting American identity during the Civil War, it has moved to the margins of American life in the 21st century. War losses are a defining experience for the families and communities of those deployed.[6] Much effort is placed on minimizing even that direct experience with war deaths through the use of high-tech warfare, like drones piloted far from the battlefield. Over time,

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[2] Emily Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (2003).
[3] James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II and the Age of Big Government* (2011).
[4] Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (2009).
[5] Ibid.
[6] Catherine Lutz, *Homefront* (2001); Steven Casey, *When Soldiers Fall: How Americans Have Confronted Combat Losses from World War I to Afghanistan* (2014).

the United States has exported its suffering, enabling the nation to kill with less risk of American casualties. It is surely a good thing to protect the lives of soldiers, but the consequences of these changes for American culture must be examined.

Just as national identity was constituted through the proximity of death in the Civil War, we must consider how national identity is affected when war is persistent, but there is no broad-based engagement with its carnage.

There is another geographic layer that affects encounters with the work of war death. In an essay "Spaces of the Dead," Thomas Laqueur writes about changes in the way death was commemorated. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, communities began to use landscaped memorial parks outside of cities, instead of crowded urban and churchyard burial places. "The most remarkable change wrought in the cultural geography of burial was the new segregation of the dead."[7] The resulting "necropolis" was a city of the dead, with "a sort of new democracy of the dead in a space far away from the living." Cemeteries were justified for public health reasons, but this doesn't explain it, Laqueur argues. The rise of the cemetery must instead be found in the cultural work the dead do for the living.[8]

The cultural work of the dead is apparent in the treatment of war dead. Rudyard Kipling explained that following World War I, "some sort of central idea was needed that should symbolize our common sacrifice wherever our dead might be laid and it was realized, above all, that each cemetery and individual grave should be made as permanent as man's art could devise."[9] A central element of British memorialization of the war, promoted by Kipling, was "the uniformity of their appearance and the equal treatment of all ranks of the dead." In the "new kind of war" that had wrecked countries as well as lives of civilians and soldiers, Joanna Scutts argues that the focus of British memorialization was "on the individual: meticulously naming and recording every lost life and imposing with absolute rigidity the concept of equality in death between workingclass soldiers and aristocratic officers."[10]

This kind of uniformity marks American military graves at Arlington National Cemetery and elsewhere. Unbroken rows of nearly identical headstones stretching for miles reveal the immense costs of war, even as they abstract the individual beneath the marker as an element of a broader national purpose.[11] To experience

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[7] Thomas W. Laqueur, "Spaces of the Dead," *Ideas* 8 (2001): 3, 11.

[8] Ibid., 5-7.

[9] Rudyard Kipling, *The Graves of the Fallen* (1919), 5, discussed in Joanna Scutts, "Battlefield Cemeteries, Pilgrimage, and Literature after the First World War: The Burial of the Dead," *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 52 (2009): 387.

[10] Scuts, 387-88.

[11] See Mark C. Mollan, "Honoring Our War Dead: The Evolution of the Government Policy on Headstones for Fallen Soldiers and Sailors," Prologue Magazine, 35, no. 1 (2013), http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2003/spring/headstones.html. See also Micki McElya, "Remembering 9/11's Pentagon Victims and Reframing History in

these cemeteries is powerful. But their separation makes them a community of the dead, in a space outside the polity. They work in our imaginations through their collective absence.

There is much more to say, of course. For example, I will take up the history of civilian war death and the way it has been conceptualized, including the history of the concept of "collateral damage."[12] And I will turn to new work on war injury and disability.[13]

One impact of all of these changes is the loss of intimacy with war death. Global U.S. military power and presidential war power increased as the burdens of the use of force ceased to be broadly shared. A working hypothesis of my project is that these two things are related to each other: that executive branch autonomy has been enabled by the distance between most Americans and the consequences of the use of military force.

Arlington National Cemetery," *Radical History Review* 111 (2011): 51.
[12] On these points, see Sahr Conway-Lanz, *Collateral Damage: Americans, Noncombatant Immunity, and Atrocity after World War II* (2006); John Tirman, *The Deaths of Others: The Fate of Civilians in America's Wars* (2011); Helen M. Kinsella, *The Image Before the Weapon: A Critical History of the Distinction between Combatant and Civilian* (2011).
[13] John Kinder, *Paying with Their Bodies* (forthcoming).