

# History and impacts of 9 11



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## Embracing Complexity

It was a typical day for Mrs. Harner at Souderton Area High School when she turned on CNN 10 for her students. A few minutes in, one of her coworkers abruptly entered the room. In a serious tone, her coworker told her, “ Nicole, put on the news.”

Before this, she had never heard him be that tense before. And though she was taken back and confused, she listened and put the news on for everyone to watch. Suddenly, the once boisterous room became silent. Everyone’s eyes were still, completely glued to the screen.

A few moments later, the principal went onto the loudspeaker to tell students and faculty to remain in their rooms.

No one knew what was going on. All that they knew was their country was under attack.

On the same day in a different place, a woman was working at an office on 222 Broadway. She was on the 9th floor with her back to the windows facing the World Trade Center. As she waited for Outlook to load on her computer, she felt a massive explosion.

The glass shook in the window frames, as did the entire building. Looking outside, she saw debris floating through the air and birds flying in absurd patterns. She looked down at the street, assuming the debris and shaking had come from another car crash, but when she looked up from the window, her eyes were met with a gaping hole in one of the towers—flames and smoke billowing out. She tried to call a few friends to try and understand

what was happening, but by then, most lines were flooded with others trying to do the same. It was next to impossible to reach anybody.

In one of the planes that slammed into the towers sat a passenger named Brian Sweeney, who was on his way to Los Angeles for a business trip when he realized that his plane had been hijacked. A few moments before United Airlines Flight 175 slammed into the World Trade Center, he managed to make a phone call from the back of the plane to his wife, Julie.

Unfortunately, at the time that the hijacking was taking place, Julie wasn't home, and Brian had to leave his final message to her in a voicemail. He said, " I'm on an airplane that's been hijacked. If things don't go well, and it's not looking good, I just want you to know I absolutely love you...and I'll see you when you get there." (cite)

A few moments after he hung up, the plane crashed into the top floors of the south tower.

Brian's plane was one of many, and while his plane was being hijacked, another plane was being hijacked as well, and this time, it was going to crash into the Pentagon.

The solicitor general under President George W. Bush, Ted Olson, was in his office at the Department of Justice on the morning of the attacks. As the events unfolded, his secretary came into his room to tell him to turn on the television.

At that point, one plane had crashed into the World Trade Center, and not long after that, the second plane had hit the towers.

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As soon as he realized what was happening in New York, he worried about his wife, Barbara, concerned that she was on one of those planes. Barbara was one of the unfortunate passengers on the plane that was about to crash into the Pentagon.

He dreaded the thought that what had happened to the airplanes in New York would happen to her plane.

She called him to tell him that the plane had been hijacked, and he continued to watch the television even after the line went dead.

Not too long later, he could see over the television screen smoke coming from the Pentagon. He knew at that moment that it was her flight. Later, it was confirmed.

To many, this word produces horrific images that can only plague people's minds. It is a problem that many countries face now. However, it isn't a simple task to resolve the issue. Countries like the United States have tried solving the ongoing issue in a variety of ways yet have failed to succeed. From the challenges it carries, it calls for a solution that is yet to be solved.

The word we have become all too familiar with, *terrorism* .

Conjuring many emotions in recent history, the word terrorism remains a contested term. It has no set definition or collective agreement among experts on its usage. In such a way that many governments have been reluctant to formulate an agreed-upon and legally binding definition.

Difficulties arise from the fact that the term has a history of being politically and emotionally charged. Some have defined terrorism as, “ violence-or equally important, the threat of violence-used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of a political aim” or, “ deliberately and violently targeting civilians and political purposes” (cite). As you can see, the contrasting perceptions and ideas of terrorism have made the term challenging to define. In America, the Code of Federal Regulations defines it as

“ the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (cite)

According to these definitions, if the violence does not have a socio-political aim, it is simply a crime and, if there is no violence, it is not terrorism.

But the commonly accepted definition doesn't have to pertain to political and social motives but could also be expanded to religious motives. Terrorism does not need to be an act of violence, but also an act of intimidation or fear. The definition of terrorism that will be addressed in this paper is the use of violence or of the threat of violence in the pursuit of socio-political, religious, or ideological objectives.

Terrorist groups or individuals make calculated decisions to engage in terrorism. The causes of terrorism can be classified into 3 layers: strategic aims, situation factors, and individual motivations. In strategic aim, it includes long-runs; political change, revolution, nationalists fighting an occupying force, minority separatist movements. Strategic aims could also be short-run; recognition or attention to advertising their cause. Or an aim

may be to disrupt and discredit the process of government or influence public attitudes; fear or sympathy. They may also use strategic aims to provoke a counter-reaction to legitimize their grievances.

Moreover, situational factors can be subdivided into two parts; (1) conditions that allow the possibility of radicalization and motivate feeling against the ' enemy', and (2) specific triggers (events) for action. Lastly, we have individual motivations. This is concerned with psychology and the character traits of terrorists; why do individuals turn to terrorism in the first place? Does a ' terrorist personality' or ' terrorist predisposition exist?'

New York City, Washington D. C., London, Paris, Boston, Brussels, Nice, Orlando, Barcelona, Manchester, Las Vegas, Madrid, Chattanooga, Istanbul, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Boulder, Sandy Hook, San Bernardino, and Fort Hood. All of these locations have one thing in common; they've had at least one major terrorist attack occur since 9/11. According to the Global Terrorism Index, in 2016, the U. S. suffered more deaths from extremist terrorism in any year since 2001 and the highest rate of lone-actor attacks among developed nations. The 53 separate incidents led to 64 deaths and 130 injured victims. (cite)

Soon after the September 11 attacks, U. S. officials found that Osama bin Laden, founder, and leader of al-Qaeda was responsible for the attacks. From that point on, the U. S. government was outraged and determined to bring them to justice. By increasing global surveillance, intelligence sharing, and the inclusion of economic and military sanctions against states perceived as harboring terrorists, the administration was able to successfully bring Osama

bin Laden and al-Qaeda to justice; not only that, they were able to prevent some emergences of terrorist networks.

In the aftermath of the attacks, the Bush Administration focused on preventing such acts to occur ever again on American soil by enacting strict regulations and preventing emergences of other terrorist networks; more importantly, the administration promptly announced a war on terrorism.

In the largest restructuring in U. S. government contemporary history, Bush signed the Homeland Security Act in November of 2002. By enacting this, they created what is formally known as the Department of Homeland Security. With the goal of detecting and prosecuting terrorism and other crimes, Congress also passed the USA Patriot Act.

Ever since the birth of our country, we had never faced anything like this before. Our first actions following it was to try a fix the issue. And to do that, we were doing actions that would only prevent the issue.

We've always tried preventing it, instead of facing it head-on.

As a global community, we are becoming more and more desensitized by the countless number of news reports related to terrorism. The constant bombardment of the 24-hour news cycle, the internet, and the socialization of the global community have brought the acts of terrorism closer to home.

After a while, these acts of terrorism are causing our minds, bodies, perceptions, and worldviews to become desensitized to these persistent images and messages of terror. Unfortunately, people becoming desensitized is doing more harm than good. As we become more numb to

the feeling, we start to ignore/not acknowledge what is happening and we stray from understanding the attacks. The endless cycle of information is feeding our lust for negativity and it is serving to cause more harm.

Moreover, the terrorist themselves are gaining ground by the constant bombardment of terrorism in the media.

We are in a "...time when terrorist attacks and thwarted plots regularly dominate the news headlines, when long queues at airport security checks have become all-too-common, and when once innocuous items (drinks, shoes, backpacks) can become the means of deadly attacks, it is clear that the threat of terrorism hangs over us as never before" (Waxman, 2011). As a society, the ever-looming presence of terrorism is darkening our perceptions and worldviews. It is normalizing the egregious acts of terrorism and causing the current generation to be nonchalant. The indifference is having a numbing effect upon our society and will have a profound effect upon generations to come.

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