

# 9 11 a tragedy that split america's history in two different periods

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## **U. S. History: America Before and After 9/11**

In 2001 after a controversial election, the U. S. had a new President, George W. Bush. Bush had lost the popular vote to Al Gore but had won the election due to the electoral college. But even in the case of the electoral college, he only won because of Florida, which he had only narrowly won by 537 votes. There was debate over whether there was tampering in the Florida election and a recount was denied by conservative majority Supreme Court.

Bush's presidency was met with bitterness and the nation's lack of confidence in its election system. During his first several months as President, Bush pursued a big-business agenda pushed tax cuts for the wealthy, opposed environmental regulations, planned to privatize Social Security, and increased the military budget. However, the tumultuous election and the new President's emerging policies would come to be greatly overshadowed by the even that was to come.

September 11, 2001, now known as 9/11, started off as a normal day and ended as one that would go down in history. Hijackers overtook four different planes which took off from the Northeast and were bound for California. This meant that these huge jets were fully loaded with fuel, maximizing the damage they would do. 19 al-Qaeda terrorists from the Middle East carried out a plan which would result in the deadliest terrorist attack in U. S. history.

At 8: 46 am, hijackers crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. The World Trade Center was a staple in the New York financial district. This attack caused all eyes to turn to the attack at the World Trade

Center and all news stations were focused on it. This ultimately led to the horror of many people as then they watched a second plane crash and explode in the South Tower of the World Trade Center at 9: 03am. The country watched their television screens as the towers burned. At 9: 59am and 10: 28am, the South and the North Towers collapsed, causing many fatalities and damage to the buildings surrounding them. People and evacuees on the streets of New York ran as a plume of ash engulfed the city.

While this was happening, at 9: 47am the 3rd plane crashed into the Pentagon. A fire broke out and the west side of the Pentagon sustained significant damage. The 4th plane was intended to be crashed in either the White House or the Capital building, but was unsuccessful. The passengers of that flight were able to somewhat successfully fight back against the hijacking terrorists, who were armed with utility knives and bombs (which were later found out to be fake). The passengers fighting against the hijackers led to the unsuccessful 4th plane being crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. The passengers, crew, and terrorists all died in the crash.

These attacks shocked the world. 2, 996 people died and over 6, 000 were injured. The attacks caused at least \$10 billion in property damage alone. Police and rescue workers all over the U. S. traveled to New York to assist in the rescue efforts and blood donations surged in the weeks following 9/11. Donation funds were started to aid the survivors of the attacks and the families of victims.

During this time, Bush's approval rating skyrocketed, reaching a high of 90%. On September 20th, he addressed the nation and declared a war on

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terrorism. This started his War on Terror, the goals of which were to bring Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda to justice for their crimes against humanity. This also put a target on Iraq, due to the assertion that leader Saddam Hussein had connections to al-Qaeda. Due to the summation that bin Laden was in Afghanistan, Bush ordered the bombing on Afghanistan despite the fact that they condemned the 9/11 attack. This bombing took place in October of 2001, a month after 9/11.

Despite Bush's public reasoning for the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq as justice for the 9/11 attacks, it has been surmised that these invasions really sought the oil that these lands provided. Furthermore, the hypocrisy of the "justice" this war provided had dawned on the American people, who thought it immoral to fight the violence of 9/11 with even more violence. What occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan was massive bombings which took any civilian casualties. The U. S.'s efforts to block off supplies to their enemies forces really just had a severe impact on the civilians off the country they were attacking.

What resulted was an ugly war with many casualties (many of which were civilians) and the decimation of Iraq and Afghanistan. The incessant bombing turned cities to rubble, which they are still recovering from. The Coalition Provisional Authority was soon put in place as a transitional government. Under them, Paul Bremer put in place the One Hundred Orders, which altered many of Iraq's existing laws to replace them with something "better". The extensive economic policies which these orders put in place had a lasting negative effect on Iraq's economy.

These orders that were put in place are also technically illegal under international law. Along with this, the U. S. took many prisoners of war during these invasions and imprisoned them in Guantanamo Bay. Many of these prisoners minor connections to al-Qaeda and some were even discovered to be completely innocent. Despite this, the CIA's released report of what occurred during this time reveal archaic torture methods which have been criticized as being crimes against humanity.

The impact the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan in 2001 and 2003 has had on these countries is massive. The level of decimation is massive. For the thousands injured and 2, 996 deaths from 9/11, many more innocent foreign civilians paid. Survivors of the 9/11 attacks even pleaded with President Bush to stop the attacks and bombings of the Middle East, but to this day we're still seeing U. S. involvement in these countries, innocent prisoners are still kept in Guantanamo Bay, and the decimation continues.