The **September 11, 2001, attacks**, often referred to as **9/11**, were a series of coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamist extremist group **al-Qaeda** against the United States. These attacks had profound effects on the U.S. and the world, reshaping global politics, security policies, and perceptions of terrorism. Here's an overview:

**The Attacks:**

1. **Four Hijacked Planes**:
   * **American Airlines Flight 11**: Crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center at 8:46 AM.
   * **United Airlines Flight 175**: Struck the South Tower at 9:03 AM.
   * **American Airlines Flight 77**: Crashed into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, at 9:37 AM.
   * **United Airlines Flight 93**: Crashed into a field in Pennsylvania at 10:03 AM after passengers attempted to overpower the hijackers. It was believed to be headed for either the White House or the U.S. Capitol.
2. **Casualties**:
   * Nearly **3,000 people** were killed.
   * Victims included individuals from over 90 countries, first responders, and passengers.
3. **Destruction**:
   * The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City collapsed, leading to massive destruction in Lower Manhattan.
   * The Pentagon suffered severe damage.

**Immediate Impact:**

* **Shock and Mourning**: The attacks deeply shocked the U.S., leading to nationwide mourning and global solidarity.
* **Economic Effects**: The financial markets were severely disrupted, and the airline industry faced significant losses.

**Response:**

1. **War on Terror**:
   * Initiated by President **George W. Bush**, it aimed to eliminate terrorist organizations and states supporting them.
   * This led to:
     + The U.S.-led invasion of **Afghanistan** (2001) to overthrow the Taliban regime, which harbored al-Qaeda leader **Osama bin Laden**.
     + The invasion of **Iraq** (2003), citing concerns over weapons of mass destruction, though these claims were later discredited.
2. **Homeland Security**:
   * Formation of the **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** in 2002.
   * Passage of the **USA PATRIOT Act**, which expanded surveillance and counterterrorism capabilities.
3. **Global Alliances**:
   * NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time, declaring an attack on one member as an attack on all, leading to multinational operations in Afghanistan.

**Long-Term Impact:**

* **Osama bin Laden**: The mastermind of the attacks was killed in 2011 during a U.S. military operation in Pakistan.
* **Cultural and Social Changes**: Heightened focus on national security and counterterrorism.
* **Global Counterterrorism**: Increased international efforts to combat terrorism, but also criticism over human rights abuses and prolonged conflicts.
* **Islamophobia**: Rise in anti-Muslim sentiment and hate crimes in the U.S. and other countries.