**Speed vs. Quality as a Reaction to Danger**

Author: Winfred Darko from the Bronx High School of Science, NY

September 11, 2001 was a day of tragedy for multitudes of people. Containing one of the worst attacks on the U.S. mainland in recent history, this day – in which so many Americans (specifically, U.S. citizens uninvolved with the military) died “in their own country” as a direct result of terrorism – would not be easily forgotten. These attacks sparked several massive responses, including the passing of the “Patriot Act” bill into law a month after the attacks and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security a year later.

Americans were (justifiably) frightened of a repeat of these attacks, which is why opposition to these policies did not have immediate support. In fact, only one person in the Senate opposed the passing of the bill. This senator, named Russel Feingold, stated,

“The proposed bill contained vast new powers for law enforcement, some seemingly drafted in haste and others that came from the FBI’s wish list that Congress has rejected in the past. You may remember that the Attorney General announced his intention to introduce a bill shortly after the September 11 attacks. He provided the text of the billt he following Wednesday, and urged Congress to enact it by the end of the week. That was plainly impossible, but the pressure to move on this bill quickly, without deliberation and debate, has been relentless ever since.”1

Here, Feingold reveals one of the biggest flaws of the decision-making process of the post-9/11 era: Making a quick decision was considered more important than making a good decision. This pushed policy-makers towards enacting policies that would eventually fail and/or backfire.

A great example of this is the Iraq war.

Only two years after the September 11 attacks, fear of another terrorist attack remained rampant. So when Bush claimed that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, most people did not question whether or not Hussein truly had these weapons, and instead wanted to make sure that they were eliminated. In 2003, enough people were willing to support Bush's decision to invade Iraq, even without the approval of the United Nations Security Council, and began the invasion.

In the words of Donald Trump, the war was a "mess." Hussein was captured within months of the invasion, and was executed in 2006. Yet, U.S. troops remained in the region until at least 2011, eight years after the invasion. Efficient plans of what to do after the removal of Hussein were not designed before the invasion, and so there were none enacted. When his death caused a vacuum of power, there was nothing to prevent the formation of insurgent groups throughout the country. It is because of this never-ending intervention that, as of September 2015, over two hundred forty thousand people have died violently since the invasion. 2

Hopefully, we can learn from these events and not make rash decisions that can end up hurting people. In the words of Senator Feingold,

“There have been periods in our nation’s history when civil liberties have taken a back seat to what appeared at the time to be the legitimate exigencies of war. Our national consciousness still bears the stain and the scars of those events: The Alien and Sedition Acts, the suspension of habeas corpus during the Civil War, the internment of Japanese-Americans, German-Americans, and Italian-Americans during World War II, the blacklisting of supposed communist sympathizers during the McCarthy era, and the surveillance and harassment of antiwar protesters, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., during the Vietnam War. We must not allow these pieces of our past to become prologue.”3