

The Terrorist Attacks of 9/11

Introduction

On September 11th, 2001, the United States was attacked unknowingly which changed the United States and is considered one of the most influential events in recent history, or perhaps in the whole history of the United States or even the world. The acts of terror were directed by an extremist organization known as al-Qaeda. The attacks commenced on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center located in New York City and the Pentagon which is located in the U.S. capitol of Washington D.C. The attacks killed nearly 3,000 people and also changed the world as they knew it. The effects of the events that occurred on 9/11 can be seen throughout the country with the American domestic and foreign policy, having a massive impact on national security, relations between other countries, and our perceptions of global terrorism. The goal of this essay is to explain the causes and effects of the 9/11 attacks, what led up to the tragedy, the response from the United States, and the long-term effects on the global scale.

The Rise of al-Qaeda

The attacks that occurred on September 11th, 2001, can be traced back to the topic of Middle Eastern geopolitics. It can also be connected to the rise of Islamist extremists. During the 1980s, the Soviets were invading Afghanistan, amongst that event, a group named Al-Qaeda rose and was led by a one Osama bin Laden. During the Cold War, the United States had aided Afghan mujahideen fighters in their

resistance against the invading Soviets, they didn't know that they were unintentionally creating radical Islamic militants. Their leader, Osama bin Laden, is originally a descendant of a wealthy Saudi family. During the time of the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, Osama Bin Laden had become radicalized as said previously and had founded the terrorist group that we know as Al-Qaeda in the late 80s.

During the 1990s, the terrorist group known as Al-Qaeda had expanded its motives and operations beyond and further than Afghanistan. The group's motives are influenced by the U.S. involvement in the Middle East at the time, more specifically because of the troops that were stationed in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War. Osama Bin Laden saw the presence of the U.S. as somewhat of a disgrace to Islam's holy sites and a threat to Muslim power. In the late 1990s, Al-Qaeda had already begun their acts of terror against the United States. These attacks include the bombings of the Tanzania and Kenya embassies in 1998, as well as another bombing on the USS Cole in 2000. By the late 1990s, al-Qaeda had begun a campaign of terrorism against American targets, culminating in the 1998 embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya and the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole. These acts of terror made the blueprint of what would happen on that memorable day of September 11th, 2001.

September 11, 2001

Before I elaborate on what happened on this tragic day, I will explain the planning of the attacks. The mastermind of all of it would of course Osama bin Laden. The 9/11 operation itself was organized by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a higher-ranking member

of Al-Qaeda. They planned to exploit the United States' air travel and use it to attack in an unconventional way.

The September 11 attacks, were commenced by 19 Al-Qaeda members. Those 19 managed to hijack four commercial airlines. Two of the planes were flown into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York, causing both to collapse which caused debris to be everywhere which claimed more lives. The third plane struck the Pentagon, the headquarters of the Department of Defence. The fourth plane, United Airlines Flight 93, crashed in a field in Pennsylvania after the passengers attempted to rebel against their hijackers.

The attacks as a whole shocked the nation as well as the whole world, just because of the execution and destruction that was brought with it. Nearly 3,000 lives were lost on that day which included those who were passengers, first responders, civilians, and even the insurgents that caused the mayhem. The effects of the disaster were immediate and devastating. Financial markets closed, all flights were grounded, and the U.S. was in a national emergency, to the point where they even went to DEFCON 3, and were on the verge of DEFCON 2. The event also had quite an effect psychologically on the Americans as it showed how their mighty country was struck that hard with an incredibly coordinated and devastating assault.

The Response

After the attacks of 9/11, the United States government, led by at the time, President George W. Bush declared the “War on Terror”, promising to hold those who were behind the attacks accountable. In the following weeks, the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom, where the U.S. military would intervene in Afghanistan where they aimed to practically dismantle the Taliban which had provided safety to Al-Qaeda members. The war in Afghanistan would be the longest war in U.S. history, which would last until 2021.

The United States government would then pass the USA Patriot Act, which boosted the federal government’s surveillance and restricted civil liberties for matters of national security. The Department of Homeland Security was also created to better the counterterrorism efforts, which made all the agencies somewhat unified and helped with national security. The attacks also made the nation increase airport security and also made them create the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

On the global scale, the attacks had made the world rally against terrorism. Countries worldwide, that had been hesitant to have conflict with Islamic extremism, would come together with the United States to combat and defeat Al-Qaeda. However, during the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, there would be more consequences such as the beginning of ISIS and the further destabilization of the Middle East.

War on Terror

The War on Terror was originally focused on Afghanistan, but later took place in Iraq. In 2003, the U.S. launched Operation Iraqi Freedom in suspicions of weapons of mass destruction in possession of one Saddam Hussein. None of the suspected weapons of mass destructions were found, but the invasion of Iraq had already further destabilized the area and had created a power vacuum which resulted in the rise of more extremist groups where one of the most notable would be ISIS.

In Afghanistan, the war was more complicated and longer than it was thought out to be. The Taliban had continue combat against the United States as well as NATO forces. Though Al-Qaeda took significant losses, they had adapted and had a vast global network.

Long-Term Effects

There were numerous long-term effects of the terror attacks, including to that of global security, U.S. foreign policy, and international relations. The Bush Doctrine had emphasized the use of force to prevent acts terror before it could even become a thought, and became a key part of American strategy. This part of their strategy had led the military to have more interventions in places such as the Middle East and South Asia, but there were was also controversy because of the legality problems and morals.

There was not only military action, but there was an improvement in intelligence and counterterrorism. Governments began to become more strict in surveillance and

counterterrorism agencies began to cooperate with each other globally. All this extra security was questioned because of invasion of one's privacy.

Economy wise, the War on Terror cost a lot globally. The United States itself had spent trillions on the military and homeland security.

The Conclusion

The attacks of September 11th were well coordinated and hit with it's purpose to attack the United States politically, economically, and culturally. The U.S. had responded with the War on Terror. There was also better security globally. The day will forever be remembered to shape the world as we know it today.

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