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## Research report

Forum: Historical Security Council

Issue: Addressing the instant impact and consequences of the 9/11 attacks on terrorism: assessing responses in the immediate aftermath

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## **Introduction**

September 11 2001, also known as 9/11. On this day, four commercial aircrafts were hijacked and crashed by al-Qaeda extremists, resulting in the deaths of nearly 3,000 ranging from 93 different nationalities.

Most of these deaths were from the two planes crashing into the North and South Towers of the World Trade Center (WTC) complex in New York City. The third plane was flown into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, while the last plane had its passengers resisting, causing it to crash onto an empty field in western Pennsylvania approximately a 20 minutes flight away from Washington, D.C.

Counting up all the fatalities, the collapsed Twin Towers and residual property damage to the Pentagon, and all of it happening within 3 hours, this attack was the worst on American soil since the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, which quickly resulted in the end of the Cold War era and the start of what we now know as “the War on Terror”.

## **Definitions of key terms**

### **Terrorism**

The unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.

### **Terrorist**

A person who uses unlawful violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.

### **Extremist**

A person who holds extreme political or religious views, especially one who advocates illegal, violent, or other extreme action.

### **War on Terror**

The Global War on Terror is an international, American-led military campaign launched following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

### **Jihad**

An Arabic word which literally means “striving” or “struggling”. Within Islamic context, it usually refers to the personal struggle to make personal and social life conform with God’s guidance, such as struggle against one’s evil inclinations.

Aside from this context, it is usually associated with (holy) war. Bin Laden declared Jihad on the USA, meaning he declared a holy war against the country.

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## General overview

While 9/11 is widely seen as the event that kickstarted terrorism, terrorist groups had been active since long before. With al-Qaeda being founded by Osama bin Laden in 1988, it had been acting as a vanguard for jihad for over 10 years already.

After the USA got attacked, shock was the reigning emotion all over the world. The public as well as the government felt it was unacceptable that such an enormous and thought-out event had been allowed to take place on American ground.

*"The attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century. A war against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them."*

*-President George W. Bush, 10/11/2001.*

Within the first 100 days of the War on Terrorism, Bush increased America's homeland security and united the world in an unprecedented coalition that:

- Began to destroy al-Qaeda's grip on Afghanistan by driving the Taliban from power.
- Disrupted al-Qaeda's global operations and terrorist financing networks.
- Destroyed al-Qaeda terrorist training camps.
- Helped the innocent people of Afghanistan recover from the Taliban's reign of terror.
- Helped Afghans put aside long standing differences to form a new interim government that represents all Afghans - including women.

With Bush's quotes, his actions and their results, the message is clear: The world adopted a policy that regards any nation that harbors or supports terrorism as a hostile regime and will be treated as such. From this point on terrorism was to be faced full-front with all resources available.

While nearly everyone agrees that these attacks should be fought against and worked to prevent to the best of everyone's abilities, there are some structural analyses of the towers and their attacks which show that the resulting damage was disproportionate to what happened and there may have been more than just the planes causing the damage, like explosives inside the buildings. Controversies around these topics suggest how difficult it should have been to plan and execute such an attack without anyone noticing, suggesting al-Qaeda may have had help from the inside. Some people even believe that the "inside man" was Bush himself.

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## **Major parties involved**

### *Al-Qaeda*

Al-Qaeda was founded in 1988 by Osama bin Mohammed bin Awad bin Laden (better known as Osama bin Laden). With bin Laden being their first general, their goal is and was to unite the Muslim world under a supra-national Islamic state known as the Caliphate.

### *Taliban*

The Taliban is a more common name for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which is a political movement in Afghanistan. From 1996 to 2001, it ruled approximately three-quarters of the country, before being overthrown after the American Invasion.

### *Homeland Security*

The term used for the American “national effort to ensure a homeland is safe, secure and resilient against terrorism and other hazards where American interests, aspirations and ways of life can thrive”.

### *Iran*

Iran is one of the countries Bush invaded in an effort to find possible terrorists and apprehend known offenders. Apart from this, Iran was the target of many sanctions the coalition thought up.

### *Afghanistan*

Afghanistan was thought to provide shelter to bin Laden after his actions, therefore Afghanistan was one of the countries targeted by invasions and sanctions by the coalition.

### *Pakistan*

Together with Pakistan and Iran, this country was invaded and targeted by sanctions coming from the coalition. Aside from this, during Obama’s presidency they were invaded which resulted in the death of bin Laden, who was then being sheltered by the Taliban.

### *United States of America*

The stage of the events, the USA, was hit hard by the attacks on the world trade center as well as the attack on the pentagon and the hijacking of United flight 93. The United States lost 2977 brave American souls and those losses unchained the Americans’ lusts for revenge and hatred against terrorism. Al-Qaeda places the ball in the Americans’ park. The way they reacted would forever change Geopolitics, counterterrorism, middle-east diplomacy and the state of affairs in many middle-eastern countries.

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## Timeline of Key Events

- 1996 Osama bin Laden signs and issues a Declaration of jihad (holy war) from Afghanistan, officially declaring war on the USA.
- 1988 Osama bin Laden founds al-Qaeda in a series of meetings after the Soviet-Afghan war
- 9/11//2001 Al-Qaeda executes their plan and hijacks four commercial planes, crashing two of them into the WTC, one of them into the Pentagon and the last one into an open field near Washington D.C.
- 9/20/2001 In an address before a joint session of Congress, George W. Bush declares war on terrorism, demanding Taliban hands over all al-Qaeda members on its soil, including bin Laden.  
“Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.”
- 10/7/2001 George W. Bush announces the start of an invasion of Afghanistan, striking against al-Qaeda training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime.
- 10/26/2001 George W. Bush signs the Patriot Act, a legislation that aims to strengthen the federal government’s counterterrorism response.
- 10/16/2002 Congress authorizes war in Iraq. Bush signs into a law allowing him to defend against “the continuing threat posed by Iraq”.
- 11/25/2002 Bush creates the Department of Homeland Security.
- 3/29/2003 George W. Bush announces the invasion of Iraq, together with the UK, Australia and Poland.
- 5/2/2011 Barack Obama launches a secret operation into Pakistan resulting in **the death of Osama bin Laden.**

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## **Previous attempts to solve the issue**

During the presidency of Bush, Clinton and Obama (as well as later presidents), a lot of efforts have been made to wage war on terrorism and respond in the immediate aftermath. These efforts usually worked towards one of two goals: Empowering the message that terrorism would not be condoned, or to actually prevent and fight against terrorism.

Some examples could be Bush's speech in which he openly declares war against terror, the invasion of both Iraq and Afghanistan, the operation in Pakistan resulting in the death of bin Laden or even the signing of the Patriot Act.

These examples are just a few of the actions undertaken. Over the years The USA, as well as the rest of the world, have instated several legislations, laws or other measures to allow for more freedom in the combat against terror such as allowing the capture and imprisonment of suspected terrorists.

Apart from this, the USA has also created the Department of Homeland Security under Bush's presidency. This department nowadays works towards the protection and improvement of the entire country, mostly focusing on the prevention of terrorism and other events working towards the benefit of terror(ists).

## **Possible solutions**

With the topic at hand, there are numerous options when it comes to working towards the extinction of terrorism. The problem arises when we talk about identifying and prosecuting (possible) terrorists. A possible course of action could be working towards more intense and strict following of civilians, reducing the chance of possible terrorists going unnoticed.

Another approach could be increasing security, in an effort to make the execution of attacks significantly more difficult.

A lot has already been attempted, meaning that future solutions will likely have to be exceedingly creative and original for them to have any effect.

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