Final Project

Nearly twenty years (17 actually) after the dramatic events of 9/11, we reflect back on the trauma Americans have experience in the aftermath of the attacks and any profound break in American society. To do so, we were able to gather the insights from various Political Science and History professors on the plausible shift the events have had on both their field of study and on society as a whole. This study will be composed of three parts. First, I would provide an introductory insight. Then, the numerous professors’ take on the matter. Finally, I would conclude with an afterword.

1. **Preliminary insight**

With the relative recency of the events, we can speculate on the changes and assess the various impacts of the tragedy of September 11, 2001, both on the Americans themselves and on the fate of the planet. While the reaction of the public was mainly of grief and fear, the government of then, that of – George Bush – reacted quickly, however, to what he considers to be an affront on the U.S. Congress passed the Patriot Act, the "war on terror" was being launched, and a series of unitary actions were taken to dispense secret service of the limits on their work of collecting information and use unorthodox methods (tortures) on enemy combatants in Guantanamo Bay. Those reactions are the immediate and noticeable shift in the state who took quickly rose to defend the American territory and sovereignty. The U.S. launched itself on a war in Afghanistan (reactionary), as it was the base of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, then Iraq (preemptively) to dismantle the assumed mass destruction arsenal of the Iraqi government. From that moment, a global threat emerged and terrorism will forever shape America’s (and its allies) views of the “other” not only as an outsider but as a stranger, an intruder, an invader whose purpose is to eliminate them.

1. **Interviews**

The Department of History, Political Science & Philosophy at Longwood University has allowed me to interview a handful of professors to share their insight on the premise that the tragic events of 9/11 have transformed the American society and evaluate the intensity of such impact on their field of study. Here is their Story:

* Dr. Cantrell has acknowledged the threats of terrorism in remote and poor places of the world and highlighted some of the solutions to alleviate the conditions that foster terrorist groups in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12Tn5OCDAauHXO0GS8BEl5lI0Dahtt4Jn/view?usp=sharing>

* Dr. Carver gave some insights on how 9/11 shaped Constitutional Law in comparison to WWII and how it changed the discourse in terms of Civil Liberties. She made the case that the American judiciary (especially the Supreme Court) did its best to remain impartial on the trials of prisoners and constantly challenged the decisions of the bush Administration in contrast to their prior complicity in the Korematsu case and the treatment of Japanese during WWII.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1az69tYNwPw30HwlPltovxKsxyVeQZmTn/view?usp=sharing>

* Dr. Cole showed that 9/11 has completely reshaped theories and debates about international relations and placed the middle east (the Arab world) in the center of the discussion. While agreeing with its impact, he stipulated that 9/11 happened within the greater unipolarization of world politics after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and that 9/11 was a manifestation of this complete bouleversement of world order.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kLu8aic5rpoDkBOYc2hkoDmpRbVV5n5k/view?usp=sharing>

* Dr. Coles insisted on the sudden awareness he has noticed amongst students. As dean of the department, he co-founded the Homeland Security program with Dr. Harbour to meet the interest of students in global politics and the greater role of the America in the world.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12SRJqZ2OQ9lkGQn2VGRIAkIcI4QqkGJ8/view?usp=sharing>

* Dr. Harbour has immersed us into the trend of the presidential power increasing whenever there is crucial change in the country. He also reflected back on how 9/11 has allowed the bush administration to have the perfect excuse to use unitary war powers. He talked about the necessity and the slippery-slopes of such power grab at times as a reflection of finding the right balance between security and personal liberties.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cKHIbTBj4DS4lHqE-1XSjLoUnwnPhK0N/view?usp=sharing>

* Dr. Isaac, despite being a medieval historian, attributed the rising demand for his Islam course to 9/11 and the willingness of students to understand whether the motivations of the terrorists resided within their religion. It also betrays the awareness and the willingness of students to reexamine the imperial behavior of the U.S. that has had consequences on people abroad for the protection citizens at home. His class uncovers the historiography behind the reading of the Quran in modern times and I intend to take in the Spring.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GzYE0t2fM_wZZlFI9lWz-lvhdcXWKyQJ/view?usp=sharing>

* Dr. Munson shared many of his personal stories about his experience during the day of the attacks and the reflects back on how he, as well as many Americans, went through various sorts of emotions both about the US officials and the terrorists.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XAdrewe15XOOZwbOudsJhiNf5K00o5Q2/view?usp=sharing>

* President Reveley IV shared his personal experience the day of the tragedies. He followed up with some comments of the impact of this event on American society, particularly on the office of the president. His passage at the Miller Center gave him the opportunity to work on (<http://web1.millercenter.org/reports/warpowers/report.pdf>): a project that proposes legislative guidelines to cope with presidential war powers.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E1AUThS_ENhsGJtxQQrCwVAKRUkJwYWp/view?usp=sharing>

1. **Afterword**

In retrospect, 9/11 will be marked as a crucial event in American history. With its short- and long-term consequences, explicitly described by the professors, it reshaped Americans lives in many ways. But why the mitigated opinion? The degree of the impact of 9/11 varies incredibly even amongst scholars. I have been lucky enough to gather several thoughts about this issue and I argue that this variance spurs from the likeliness of an individual to be solely reliant on the news media information. It is undeniable that the news media has help propagandized the stigma of the “other” and perpetrated the hysteria around 9/11.

This behavior of the media is certainly what has been the biggest and more sustained impact of 9/11. The role of the media has been double-edged and we are starting to perceive the consequences of their coverages. At the early mornings after the attacks, the coverage of the attacks where plenty and essential for the community to know what had happened. Yet, as soon as the patriotic moment phased out, we saw an increase in fear-mongering and scare tactics to justify the legal encroachments of civil liberties by the Bush administration behind the excuse of an endless war against terrorism. In this respect, we saw three main cases[[1]](#footnote-1) that revealed and reverted the denial of habeas corpus to enemy combatants both domestically and abroad. The abuses occurring had also been lightly brushed aside to the point where violating the international law (mainly promulgated by the US itself) was just “different in this case”.

This first complicity of the media has completely shattered the image of the United States as leader of the free world and complicated diplomatic relations with the Arab world. The geopolitical order, which is based on perception, has been shattered by mistrust, vilification, and the permanent scar from either side. The American word now seems less trustworthy because of international law violations committed as a hasty response to 9/11. The Arab countries aren’t the only ones affected by this. Indeed, the international community is at risk because authoritarian regimes like Russia and China are using the same American justifications to alienate their Muslim population; respectively, the Chechens and the Uighurs. The obsessive behavior of the media has also fused into the public as we have seen contemporary and post 9/11 authors use more psychological perspective in their works. In that regard, the works we have studied in this class (books and movies), highlight the complexity of human morality and ethical standards in front of an adversarial circumstance. Jutta resisted German brainwashing, Werner constantly struggled internally, Etienne went against his principles to do something for the greater good of the community, Spielgmann refused to believe the media scapegoating, Reese’s lack of purpose is met with finch’s plan. In many other ways, the literature we have uncovered during this semester reflect this ambiguous morality of the post 9/11 era; a morality stuck between excuses and justifications for questionable actions and a vain sense of remorse that has changed the discourse.

Indeed, the second complicity of the media is noticeable in a false obligation to correct their prior mistakes. Having noticed their responsibility in the response of the public to these events, the news media has decided to overcorrect itself to the point of becoming nearly apologetic to attacks or threats of attacks to the United States or its allies. A shift had, thereby, happened with a media highlighting how the United States imperial power abroad frustrates population (especially from the Arab world) to retaliate. In this respect, any strong foreign policy agenda set would be met be with harsh criticisms from commentator; more focus in now on the domestic agenda and the environmentalist role of the US in this global Economy. Through this shift, other resentments have emerged given the long history of the American public resenting a minority group as it was done during world war II Japanese internment camps. Immigration naturally became a hot-button issue because the sudden shift of the news preaching for more inclusion. Two things to note here. Fist, the fresh memories of 9/11, galvanized by the hysteria of the media, has created a more protective (more keened to exclusion) population; and that feeling has yet to dissolve. Second, many posthumous lies, like Iraq’s nuclear project, were revealed and undermined the credibility of the news media and politicians for the years to come. Therefore, when a population, scared of the unknown, is met with a sudden will of the political elite to move beyond past these tragedies, it creates animosity towards a given group. That’s why we see xenophobia of every form in the current political settlement. In response, those targeted minority groups have regrouped themselves into an intersectionality coalition based on sex, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, in order to combat the hierarchy of powers.

These two sides have been the demographic bases for the politics of our generations. Therefore, the traces of 9/11 remain deeply embedded in the psychological makeup of Americans and populations around the world. Whether it would be remained as a turning point or as a simple footnote in history, 9/11 has had a big impact on the world because of the effect it has had on the mentality of people: the awareness on global politics, the unconscious acts of assumptions, the stigma, the virtual division of countries into “civilizations”, the emotions, the forced inclusion met with a harsh intolerance; not to mention the traces left in the literatures, the movies, the symbols, the court cases, the legislations, the schools, the classes, the students,… your students!

1. Rasul v. Bush (2006), Hamdan v. Rumsfeld (2006), Hamdi v. Rumsfeld (2004) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)