By All Means Necessary

An Analysis on the effect of 9/11 on American Citizens

I have fully upheld the Delbarton Honor Code in letter and spirit

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Despite events such as the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, and 2006’s Hurricane Katrina, no natural disaster or attack on American soil has resonated emotionally in the heart of Americans like the attacks on September 11, 2001. Prior to 9/11, America seemed to be an invulnerable nation, immune to all threats of violence. After the attacks, American citizens’ view quickly changed, as peace, confidence, and stability abruptly changed to fear and uncertainty. Although the September 11 attacks caused much destruction and despair, the attacks enhanced the power of the United States government because they enabled the government and its officials to resolve problems concerning border security, pass unlawful legislation, and allow the executive branch and government agencies to assume new powers that could not have been enacted without the distress caused by this tragic event. The September 11 attacks caused the American citizens to act in a state of panic which made citizens more open towards seemingly unprecedented courses of action by the government and its agencies. In addition, the government used the attacks as an incentive to resolve domestic issues such as the illegal drug trafficking and immigration issues that ensued along the Southern Border of the United States. Moreover, the government and its officials used its newfound power caused by the distress brought about 9/11 to pursue economic ventures overseas. Furthermore, the government used the panic and American desire for security to gain support for its overseas economic and political ventures.

During the 1980s, a group of young Muslims from across the globe went to Afghanistan to join in a jihad against the USSR. One of the young Muslims was a wealthy Saudi named Osama Bin Laden. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Bin Laden and the jihads continued
their mission and redirected their energy towards other targets including the United States. Bin Laden constantly stressed his grievances against the United States, grievances that are generally shared across the Muslim world. He fulminated against The United States’ presence in Saudi Arabia which serves as a home to Islam’s holiest sites and against United States, and the region’s economic and political policies.¹ Over a decade, Bin Laden help to found and build the dynamic and lethal organization known as Al Qaeda. He created a system in which he could attract, train, and use recruits against ambitious targets such as the United States. Prior to 2001, al Qaeda and other terrorist troops attempted to attack the United States in events like the attempt to bomb the World Trade Center in 1993.² However, the events of September 11, 2001 proved more successful and fatal.

On September 11, 2001, 19 men associated with Al Qaeda, a militant Islamic group, hijacked four commercial airliners and carried out suicide attacks against various targets in the United States. Two of the hijacked planes were flown into the Twin Tours in New York City. The third plane landed outside of Washington D.C. crashing into the Pentagon. The fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The attacked resulted in the death of over 3,000 Americans; about 400 of those people were police officers and firefighters.³ The Islamic terrorists involved in carry out the fatal events on September 11, 2001 were from Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations. The terrorist claimed that the attack was a response to America’s support of Israel, its

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involvement in the Persian Gulf War, and its continued presence in the Middle East. The terrorist smuggled box-cutters through security and boarded flights headed to California because they carried a substantial amount of fuel. Over the course of ten hours American watched in fear as the tragic events unfolded along the east coast.

Due to the distress brought about by the September 11 attacks, the American people became more open to idea of war and heavily supported the initial years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In a “1A” poll managed by the USA Today, CNN, and Gallup on August 27 of 2003, the survey reported that 51 percent of Americans supported the idea of sending more troops or keeping the force at current levels. As time progressed, however, Americans changed their attitudes towards the war efforts. In a national survey conducted from February 20th to February 24th of 2008 that included 1,508 adults, 54 percent said that the United States made the wrong decision in using military force in Iraq; while the other 38 percent stated that the United States made the right decision. In addition to the survey taken in 2008, a survey by USA Today posed a much broader question. In the survey, the participants were asked the question, “Do you believe the efforts in Iraq are going well?” Exactly two thirds of the American citizens asked in the survey stated that the war was not going well; moreover, this result was the largest percentage expressing this view since the war began. Less than two years after the September 11 attacks and a few months after the invasion of Iraq, Americans remained fervent on sending

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troops to Iraq. The Americans had a common motive that bonded them together to fight against terrorism. Americans wanted to strike back against terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and prevent future threats. The impact that 9/11 had on Americans was still present during the years 2001 through 2004. However, as time progressed, support for the war by American citizens began to dwindle. Although the attacks were undoubtedly not forgotten, Americans began to heal emotionally from the attacks and began to think rationally about the war effort. Although the attacks will always resonate in the hearts of Americans and American history, the immediate impact of the event caused Americans to support measures that would not have been enacted without the distress caused by the September 11 attacks.

In addition to the polls that displayed American vulnerability and increased openness to the war effort, the panic shown by Americans after the attacks are shown through the words and actions of Congress. Due to the anxiety Americans experienced after the attacks, President Bush was able to execute an extensive mandate to act in the defense of the nation. President Bush delivered a speech nine days after the attacks where he asked all American citizens to be “calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat”; moreover he emphasizes in that same speech that the United States would overcome terrorism – “stop it, eliminate it, destroy it where it grows.” The speech – Bush’s commencement of United States military operations in Afghanistan that October – and the defenselessness of many Americans caused Bush’s approval ratings to rise steeply to 90 percent. The rise in support of Bush and the war effort allowed congress to pass bills that in a time of peace would not pass. Bills of this nature include

the USA Patriot Act. The act gave investigative agencies such as the FBI and the CIA considerable leeway in their domestic surveillance activities. The leeway includes record searches, secret searches, and intelligence searches.\(^\text{10}\) In addition, the government could force libraries, doctors, and private organizations to forfeit records to government investigative organizations at any time. In a time of peace and stability, the USA Patriot Act would not have been passed. American citizens would heavily oppose a bill gave the FBI and CIA unchecked power. The American values of freedom and privacy founded in the Bill of Rights and installed into the minds of citizens would have caused an insurrection if a bill of that nature were passed in 2014 as opposed to 2001. However, the looming threat of an imminent attack provoked fear in many Americans. When the government offered to take control of the situation and protection, many Americans relented and offered their cooperation even when those bills and revisions such as USA Patriots Act violate the Fourth Amendment.

Along with American submission to the government and their support for the war effort immediately after the attacks, the government and American government officials benefitted domestically from the attacks. Prior to the September 11 attacks, The United States and Mexico had an unstable and difficult relationship due to the immigration issues and drug trafficking that date back to the 1980’s. During the 1980’s Mexicans served as the middlemen for the Columbian cartels to smuggle marijuana and opium into the United States. Prior to the attacks, Mexican drug traffickers served as the primary transporters of narcotics into the United

States. Under the Southwest Border Initiative, DHS has doubled the number of personnel assigned to Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BESTs). These forces work to increase the number of intelligence analyst along the border focused on cartel violence; moreover, the forces work to dismantle criminal organizations along the border. In addition, a 600 million dollar supplemental requested passed by the United States government enabled the DHS to continue to add personnel, technology, and infrastructure to the Southwest border. The United States government executed reforms that intended to secure the border in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Before the attacks, the security along the border was more vulnerable to penetration by drug cartels and undocumented immigrants. The United States border was so vulnerable that drug traffickers seemed to put no effort into hiding drugs. Seemingly legitimate tractor trailers crossed the border with barrels of marijuana; legal immigrants walked across the border while carrying concealed bags of heroin; and traffickers were allowed to cross the border with heroin in different compartments of their cars. Dealers have gotten away with these simple tactics for over 30 years. With the new border initiative, illegal immigration attempts are less than one third of what they were at their peak, according to the Border Patrol. Although the United States government and its agencies took the necessary reform to secure the border, the border is not impenetrable. The commissioner of the United States Customs and Border protection was quoted saying that “The terrain can be

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13 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 58
14 United States Department of Homeland Security, 58
quite different depending on what part of the border you are talking about and there are
different ways, different tactics really, that need to be brought into play.”¹⁵ Evidently,
protecting the 1,954 mile border between the United States and Mexico remains a difficult task
evén for one of the most powerful countries in the world. However, although the task is
difficult, there has been recorded increases in drug seizures. According to the New York Times,
border apprehensions have been driven down to approximately 365,000 in 2012, a 78 percent
decline since 2000; moreover, the decline can be attributed to the reforms made after the
9/11.¹⁶ Although the Southern border protection remains a debated issue in Congress, the
government benefitted and took advantage of the fear and trauma associated with the 9/11
attacks and use it to attempt to resolve other issues such as drug trafficking problems with the
Mexican Border.

In addition to the domestic benefit brought about by the attacks, government officials
benefitted from the overseas effort. Some government officials benefitted privately and
personally from the attacks through corruption. The September 11 attacks opened new
avenues for corruption in government, much of it made legal by the officials who benefitted.
The government’s reacted to 9/11 with an immediate increase in the military and Pentagon
budget. After the attacks and later in the 2000s, the Pentagon’s budget and expenditures on
the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan amounted to over 700 billion dollars per year.¹⁷ Although the

harder-to-measure.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1.
¹⁶ Cave http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/world/americas/border-security-hard-to-achieve-and-harder-to-
measure.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1.
¹⁷ William Hartung, "The Military-Industrial Complex Revisited: Shifting Patterns of Military Contracting in the Post-
9/11 Period." Costs of War, Accessed December 25, 2014,
increase is logical due to the increase in soldiers and security overseas, the budget that was then given to specific contractors was not rationally distributed. This unfair distribution gained controversy due to the connection of one of the contracting companies to the Vice President of the United States Dick Cheney. During the early 1990’s the government developed the Logistics Civil Augmentation program, which is a program managed by the United States Army to offer contingency support to supplement the Army force structure. The LOGCAP concept led to the rise of corruption in American overseas economic ventures. During that period, an eager businessman and Secretary of Defense named Dick Cheney took advantage of the inflow of funding to contracting companies. Around 1995, a contracting company named Halliburton received the first contract under the LOGCAP program. Dick Cheney then left government in order to become the CEO of Halliburton. Initially, the transition from Secretary of Defense to CEO of a contracting company did not raise much suspicion. However, controversy arose when it became known that contracting companies such as Halliburton received large no-bid, cost-plus contracts for nominal work prior to 9/11. Although Dick Cheney had resigned his position as CEO prior to the attacks, Haliburton’s contracts grew more than tenfold between the fiscal years of 2002 and 2006 due to contacts that provided logistical support to United States troops in Iraq and rebuild Iraq’s oil infrastructure. However, since the increase was rather large and sudden for nominal work, it raised suspicion. Critics and politicians such as Representative of California Henry Waxman became skeptical about the sharp increase in contracts. The

19 Hartung, 3
20 Hartung, 3
Pentagon responded to the cynicism stating that “the need was for overseas aid was urgent, particularly with respect to putting out oil fires in the event that Saddam Hussein’s regime set them on fire as it had done during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.” During that period, LOGCAP served as Halliburton’s main source of revenue. In Cheney’s final year alone, he earned over 26 million dollars. Unfortunately, the actions that Cheney took to secure that large sum of money is considered legal. The ambiguity within the law allowed government officials like Dick Cheney to cash in on government service with relative impunity. It is difficult to find a more obvious and barefaced instance of the controversies inherent in the “revolving door” – A situation in which people with experience in an industry take government jobs in agencies that set policy for that industry and in which government employees take private-sector jobs in order to use their connections and knowledge to favorably influence government policy regarding their industry. The rise in government contracts could not have been possible without the instability caused by the 9/11. Evidently, Halliburton received an increase in government contracts between 2002 and 2006; coincidently, these years were on the eve of the 9/11 attacks. By this period, Americans still made impulsive decisions concerning the military’s presence in Iraq. Americans did not anticipate the corruption that ensued after 9/11, preventing another attack and stifling terrorist threats remained their main priority. Only after

21 Hartung, 3
the impact and panic caused by 9/11 began to abate Americans become aware of the corruption that ensued abroad.

With the corruption that took place overseas, corporations in the United States and the United States military benefit because military presence overseas allowed them to secure oil interest in Iraq and Afghanistan and monitor the actions of Saddam Hussein who had the power to destroy the America’s overseas oil market. Prior to the United States invasion in Iraq, oil remained a central topic in international affairs, mainly because the price of oil heavily affected the United States. Many businessmen and politicians such as Dick Cheney feared because most nationalized oil companies lacked the expertise and competence to meet the heavy demand for oil. Furthermore, he continued by stating that if companies did not increase production, demand would exceed supply and the nation would enter an energy crisis.24 As predicted by Dick Cheney, oil prices began to rise in 2000 during George Bush’s election campaign. The rising prices provoked a response from the presidential candidate George W. Bush. In Saginaw, Michigan George W. Bush said, “Oil consumption is increasing. Our production is dropping. Our imports are skyrocketing. As a result, America, more than ever, is at the mercy of foreign government and cartels – at the mercy of big foreign oil.”25 As demand for oil increased and supply in America decreased, overseas oil markets in countries like Iraq became the target suppliers for the United States. However, Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq served as an obstacle in maintaining a steady supply of oil in America. The United States needed reason to enter Iraq and assume authority. As a result, the United States took advantage of the

25 Cramer and Thrall, 277
opportunity to invade Iraq after 9/11 under the context that they were entering to eliminate the terrorist threat and find the people involved in the September 11 attacks. Although the government never explicitly stated that the United States entered Iraq due to oil interest, it appeared so about five years after the attacks. The government would never overtly state that the country was entering a war with Iraq due to oil interest, but because of the United States prolonged stay in Iraq, citizens began to take notice. As the stay in Iraq progressed, many Americans began to question whether American interest in Iraq was to ensure American security or oil interest. As a result of the question, many important politicians and military generals began to voice the truth. General John Abizaid, former head of U.S. Central Command and Military Operations in Iraq, in 2007 said, “Of course it's about oil; we can't really deny that.”26 Additionally, Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan voiced his opinion in his memoir saying, "I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil."27 Although oil was not the only motive for invading Iraq, it served as one of the central motives. Without the impact of 9/11, the government would not have the support from citizens that it needed to execute such a large scale invasion. Because the period after the September 11 attacks was one of fear and instability, many citizens began to trust the government; furthermore, the trust allowed the government to invade and stay in Iraq for a prolonged period without much opposition.

The September 11 attacks heightened the power of the United States Government because they allowed the government and its officials to attempt to resolve domestic issues

26 Antonia Juhasz, "Why the War in Iraq was Fought for Big Oil," CNN, last modified April 15, 2013, www.cnn.com/2013/03/19/opinion/iraq-war-oil-juhasz/.
27 Juhasz, www.cnn.com/2013/03/19/opinion/iraq-war-oil-juhasz/.
such as illegal immigration and drug trafficking along the Southern border, overseas disputes such as the Iraq oil crisis, and pass legislation that could not have been enacted without the distress caused by the attacks. The 9/11 attacks caused the nation to act in a state of panic which made citizens more lenient towards seemingly unfounded courses of action by the government and its agencies. In addition, the panic brought about by the attacks allowed the government to deal with domestic issues and pass legislation to combat the ongoing drug trafficking issue along the Southern Border of the United States. Lastly, the distress brought about by the September 11 attacks benefit the government’s overseas efforts because the attacks indirectly allowed the government to handle the rising demand of oil; moreover, the attacks aided corrupt politicians like Dick Cheney who left congress in order to take advantage of government contracts overseas. 9/11 is not the first time in American history where the government was able to take advantage of the general emotions of Americans in order to increase support for war effort. Americans reacted similarly in 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Prior to the attacks the United States did not formally enter the World War II, but the attacks not only gave the government a reason to declare war, it also raised morale and support for the World War II. The increased morale was shown through the willingness of citizens to give up regular consumer goods in order to support the war effort. Even during a period of intense racial discrimination and debates concerning gender roles, a sizeable amount of African Americans and women served as the work force throughout World War II on the home front. Although Americans after 9/11 did not have to sacrifice their goods, Americans demonstrated their support of the invasion through their power as voters. The rise in morale was demonstrated through American support of any legislation that seemed geared towards
national security and “defeating the enemy”, even if that legislation violated their unalienable rights. When Americans feel their sense of stability and security is threatened by an outside force or an opposing country, they unify until the threat is neutralized, even if it involves giving up values, goods, or, in the case of soldiers in both World War 2 and the Iraq Invasion, their lives.
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