

Part 1, Chapter 2

9/11—A Nation Transformed

And when We decide to destroy a town (population), We (first) send a definite order (to obey Allah and be righteous) to those among them ... Then, they transgress therein, and thus the word (of torment) is justified against it (them). Then We destroy it with complete destruction.

—***Qur'an 17:16***

The pieces of the bodies of infidels were flying like dust particles. If you would have seen it with your own eyes, you would have been very pleased, and your heart would have been filled with joy.

—**Osama bin Laden¹**

Time is passing. Yet, for the United States of America, there will be no forgetting September the 11th. We will remember every rescuer who died in honor. We will remember every family that lives in grief. We will remember the fire and ash, the last phone calls, the funerals of the children.

—**President George W. Bush²**

Seen from 230 miles above, the event on Earth was not dramatic—just a plume of dirty smoke where no smoke was expected. The International Space Station glided through its orbit silent and majestic against the vastness of space on the morning of September 11, 2001. From its perspective, the planet below was placidly turning as it had been since long before the appearance of man. The landmasses below showed no sign of ideological or political boundaries, no artificial lines or colors to mark either the borders of thoughts or the borders of governments. All Captain Frank L. Culbertson, commander of the NASA Expedition-3 mission aboard the ISS at the time, knew from the map on his computer was that he was passing southeast from Canada into New England when reports reached orbit about what had happened in New York and Washington, D.C.

Two planes had slammed into the World Trade Center towers in New York City. A third had struck the Pentagon. Commander Culbertson quickly got hold of a video camera and found a window with a good view of New York. He recorded the odd plume of smoke rising up from far below, streaming toward the south from Manhattan. Culbertson knew, despite the hundreds of

miles between himself and the scene of destruction, that something profoundly disturbing had happened. Nevertheless, in his NASA radio address that day he tried to be reassuring:

I just wanted the folks to know that their city still looks very beautiful from out in space. I know it's very difficult for everybody in America right now. The country still looks good, and for New Yorkers, your city still looks great from up here.³

Down there, it was chaos. The magnitude of the sudden, senseless violence and carnage was more than any rational mind could grasp. Even seasoned news reporters struggled to find words. Jaded comedians and pundits could only look on in horror. All struggled to find the right words, and no words adequate to the situation came.

The most stupefying fact at the core of it all was that the cruelty of the massacre, the indiscriminate viciousness of the wanton destruction, was the culmination and legacy of Islam. At the dawn of the 21st century there were still people in the world who believed, as an unquestioned article of faith, that inflicting such chaos and suffering on others was a holy act and a ticket to some mystical paradise.

THE 9/11 ATTACK PLAN AND EXECUTION

The events of 9/11 were not random. There was an overseer, an inspirational figure regarded by other Muslims who knew him as devout, a man who dedicated his life to living as well as he could in the way established by Muhammad. That man was already known to the United States; his name was Osama bin Laden.

But for all the importance attached to bin Laden, he was not the architect of the destruction. That dubious honor belongs to another man, also a devout Muslim, known as Khalid Sheikh Muhammad (KSM). It was KSM who hatched the plan to hijack commercial airliners and crash them into buildings to produce the wholesale slaughter of civilians. Bin Laden merely provided the money and the organizational power to make this plan a reality.

Yet for all bin Laden's money and KSM's clever scheming, the plot would have come to nothing without workmen to carry it out. Bin Laden and KSM had 19 such men, all devoted as they were to being model Muslims in the mold of Muhammad. Like bin Laden, these men spent their lives obeying the Qur'anic decree to follow the "good example" of conduct established by Islam's founder.⁴ In other words, all 19 hijackers were devoted emissaries of Islam.

Osama bin Laden had no compunctions about sending 19 young men to kill themselves along with however many thousands of victims. Muhammad had already told them all, “Whoever amongst us is killed as a martyr shall go to Paradise to lead such a luxurious life as he has never seen.”⁵ And he had also told them, “Whoever produces a proof that he has killed an infidel, will have the spoils of the killed man.”⁶ Muhammad said so, and Muhammad was the ideal model of human conduct.

When the mission clock started on September 11, 2001, the trained hijacking crews were deployed to strategically chosen locations, where they joined commercial flights as ordinary passengers. Once the planes were airborne, the hijackers took control of the aircraft and turned the vehicles into weapons of mass destruction. The intended result was misery for the enemy, martyrs for Islam. The exact identities of the victims didn’t matter—the goal was mayhem, terror, and murder on the broadest possible scale for the greater glory of Islam.

When the dust cleared, there were nearly three thousand dead, untold billions of dollars in damage done, and a nation scarred. Islamic imperialism had arrived.

THE DICHOTOMY

When the International Space Station passed over the United States after the events of September 11, the nation may have looked the same as before, but it was a very different place. Commander Culbertson knew it. On the day after the destruction, he wrote:

It’s difficult to describe how it feels to be the only American completely off the planet at a time such as this. The feeling that I should be there with all of you, dealing with this, helping in some way, is overwhelming. I know that we are on the threshold (or beyond) of a terrible shift in the history of the world. Many things will never be the same again after September 11, 2001. Not just for the thousands of thousands of people directly affected by these horrendous acts of terrorism, but probably for all of us. We will find ourselves feeling differently about dozens of things, including probably space exploration, unfortunately.

It’s horrible to see smoke pouring from wounds in your own country from such a fantastic vantage point. The dichotomy of being on a spacecraft dedicated to improving life on the earth and watching life being destroyed by such willful, terrible acts is jolting to the psyche, no matter who you are. And the knowledge that everything will be different than

when we launched by the time we land is a little disconcerting.⁷

That very dichotomy between the orderly accomplishments of science and the chaotic impulses of mysticism has lurked beneath all of mankind's attempts at progress and civilization. But rarely has it stood in such stark contrast as it did on the brutality of that day in 2001. For the short term, at least, the forces of chaos had the upper hand.

IMMEDIATE AND LASTING EFFECTS OF THE 9/11 ATTACKS

The American psyche was changed by September 11. In the months and years since the attacks, awareness of global Islamic terrorism has become part of our daily consciousness. The use of peaceful passenger aircraft as weapons against defenseless civilian populations is doubtless a major reason for this. Such a barbaric act, with no hint of human decency, struck many at the time—and now—with the feeling that some primordial beast had gone on a rampage.

The American government didn't understand it and had no answer to it. It still doesn't.

1. Government Intrusion

A crucial change to America after September 11 was the passage of the PATRIOT Act. Ostensibly designed to protect Americans from future terror attacks, this Act allows the government to invade the personal lives of its citizens like never before.

This legislation provided the government with unprecedented power to search the personal information and communications of its citizens. Not only phone calls but e-mails and financial records were open to government access, even if the citizens involved were not suspected of involvement in criminal activity. Government agencies became capable of warrantless monitoring of civilians on a scale previously unknown in American history. Furthermore, because of the mandate of secrecy, people may not even know they've been spied upon.

The Information Awareness Office is an example of the increased power of the government to snoop on its citizens. Created in 2002 to collect large amounts of electronic data in hopes of preventing future terror attacks, the IAO was the brainchild of John Poindexter, who gained his reputation as a national security advisor under the Reagan administration. The purpose of the IAO system is to recognize patterns of behavior and map out possible terrorist attacks in

time to prevent them from happening. To that end, IAO collects electronic information about any seemingly normal private activity (such as car rentals, website use, and financial transactions). The work of IAO soon became polarized, however, as some Americans began to suspect IAO was encroaching too much on the privacy of citizens while apologists (including President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama) argued that strict surveillance was necessary for safety.

In the sage words of Benjamin Franklin, “Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.”

2. Effects on Travel

One of the most noticeable effects of September 11 on Americans is the proliferation of airport security. The Aviation and Transportation Security Act sailed through congress in November 2001, while the events of September were still fresh in the minds—and fears—of the people. This act made the American government rather than individual airports responsible for airport security. A federal security force, the Transportation Safety Administration, was created to scrutinize passengers and flight crew—and a lingering sore spot for American travelers ever since.

Among the many embarrassing outrages the TSA has been connected with was the insistence by agents at a Florida airport that a 95-year-old female cancer patient remove her wet adult diaper because it was interfering with their pat-down procedure. When the woman’s daughter started to cry over the indignity, she earned a pat-down of her own. The government’s response? Fully justified, nothing to see here, move along.⁸

In another incident, TSA agents (again in Florida) acted quickly to save passengers from a potential terrorist threat by a passenger named “Riyanna” from a JetBlue plane about to take off from Fort Lauderdale. The infamous Riyanna was on the much-discussed “no fly” list. The fact that the actual Riyanna was an 18 month old infant drinking from a bottle in her mother’s arms didn’t stop the TSA from pulling her and her parents off the plane and holding up departure for half an hour. By the time the absurd situation was resolved, the family was too embarrassed to get back on the plane. When questioned about the incident, TSA blamed the airline, which pointed the finger right back at TSA.⁹

There was still more uproar when TSA introduced full-body scans. In 2010, Oceanside, California resident John Tyner refused to submit to TSA’s full-body scan for health and privacy

reasons. At first, he agreed to the pat-down which TSA requires for those who reject the scan. Then at the last minute Tyner backed out of the intimate search and received a refund for his plane ticket. When a TSA official decided to perform the search anyway, Tyner refused. The TSA fined him \$10,000 and threatened him with prosecution. Tyner complained to a reporter that he didn't fit the profile of a terrorist because he was "white, short brown hair, 6-foot-1." With that statement, Tyner proved himself more rational than anyone in Congress since the first plane hit the North Tower. Washington Post columnist Charles Krauthammer discussed the abuses of uniformed government gropers in more measured language:

Everyone knows that the entire apparatus of the security line is a national homage to political correctness. Nowhere do more people meekly acquiesce to more useless inconvenience and needless indignity for less purpose. Wized seniors strain to untie their shoes; beltless salesmen struggle comically to hold up their pants; 3-year-olds scream while being searched insanely for explosives—when everyone, everyone, knows that none of these people is a threat to anyone.¹⁰

3. Cost to American Society

The *New York Times* has estimated the total cost to the United States of the September 11 attacks, including the ensuing wars, at \$3.3 *trillion*.¹¹ Most estimates of the cost to put Osama bin Laden's plan into action peg it at around \$500,000. Mathematically speaking, the incident has cost the United States over six million times as much as it has cost Muslims.

This doesn't even take into account ongoing spending arising from the attacks. Federal spending on homeland security increased from \$16 billion to \$72 billion between 2001 and 2014.¹² State, local, and private sector expenditures for security have necessarily increased due to the terrorist threat. This isn't even taking into account the money spent on wars in the Middle East.

4. Commercial Financial Losses

Almost as soon as the first plane struck the North Tower, global stock markets began to plummet in response to the September 11 attacks. In America, the markets were closed for four days—the longest such closure since 1933, when President Franklin Roosevelt closed them for two days to prevent a bank run. The effects of the attacks on the stock market were long-lasting and kept stock prices depressed for several years.¹³

Some of the biggest financial losses arose from insurance claims. The RAND Corporation did a study of these costs:

The RAND study found that the majority of the \$38.1 billion in total payouts to individuals and businesses that could be quantified came from insurers (\$19.6 billion). Another substantial piece (\$15.8 billion) came from government programs. The remaining amount (\$2.7 billion) came from charitable organizations.¹⁴

Property insurance claims for the World Trade Center buildings were settled at around \$5 billion.

The September 11 attacks also deeply aggravated pre-existing financial problems in the airline industry. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of workers employed by the airlines fell 26 percent. U.S. airline revenues fell by nearly the same rate, and carriers reported operating losses of close to \$20 billion in the wake of the tragedy.¹⁵ Travelers and airlines alike must contend with higher operating costs and increased travel delays due to new security procedures.

5. Effect on New York City

Already suffering a slowdown due to the dot-com bust, the economy of New York City was hit dramatically by 9/11. The third quarter of 2001 saw the city's economy contract by around 15%. Jobs in finance, insurance, and real estate—mainstays for city revenue and employment—were lost by the thousands. More than 13 million square feet of office space was destroyed and another 21 million square feet damaged.¹⁶ In all, nearly 18,000 businesses were “dislocated, disrupted or destroyed” by the attacks.¹⁷ The federal government stepped in with more than \$20 billion for direct assistance, economic development, and repairs.

Both the public and private sectors in New York were drastically affected by the attacks and their aftermath. In addition to the money and effort needed for cleanup, Manhattan lost approximately 30 percent of its office space. Scores of business disappeared from the area never to return. Thousands of small businesses, lacking the resources or the savings of large corporations, were destroyed or displaced.

THE MEANING OF 9/11

Such a major event with such deep, far-reaching costs has had no shortage of explanations and analysis. It is sometimes suggested that poverty, lack of aid, or support for Israel are relevant factors. They are not.

Prior to World War II, the Arab nations were extremely poor. In the years since, thanks to Western aid and trade (and enormous oil reserves), many of these nations are among the most prosperous in the world. The West has sent trillions of dollars to Muslim nations since World War II to build their infrastructure and purchase their oil. Since the 1950s, the West has directed billions of dollars in direct aid to Palestinians, Pakistanis, and Egyptians. Financially speaking, the West has supported Muslims much more than they have supported Israel.

Alternative explanations fail to account for a simple fact: the September 11 attacks were planned and executed by Muslims. The Muslims involved, from Osama bin Laden on down, understood their actions as the continuation of the Universal Jihad against infidels that has been going on since the birth of Islam. Islam does not believe in peace with infidels—making peace means you have no more cause for enmity. Rather, Islam believes in making truce with infidels. Truce is temporary. Truce is a tactic to be resorted to when Islam is in a weak position. Islam describes the state of the world this way: the Muslim nations are *Dar al-Islam*, the house of Islam; everywhere else is *Dar al-Harb*, the house of war. It is therefore improper to say that American support for Israel provokes Muslim anger: Muslims have been angry for 1,400 years. They want the whole world.

Speaking frankly, even if the whole world became Muslim there would be no peace. As the bloody conflicts between Sunni and Shia indicate, Muslims would still be killing one another. If two men are left on the planet, and both are Muslims, you can bet they will object to each other's interpretation of religious law.

CHAOS AND CULTURE

Within weeks of each other in 2001, two major initiatives were set in motion. Each involved millions of dollars and the coordinated efforts of large groups of people. One initiative was the legacy of thousands of years of scientific and cultural progress, the fruit of centuries of advancement in the arts and sciences. It was a mission to the International Space Station consisting of an American and two Russians—former global enemies—with the benign purpose of increasing our knowledge and understanding of the universe.

The other initiative was the legacy of one man, Muhammad, who told his followers that the “one and only god” spoke to him in private, telling him what was right and wrong. That initiative produced a secret plot by Muslims to rain death and suffering upon an unsuspecting

and innocent people, without regard for justice or human decency. It seems symbolically fitting that those engaged in the first initiative, motivated by rational thought, looked down from on high at the horror created by those engaged in the second, motivated by mysticism and dogma.

September 11, 2001 saw a pivotal moment in the clash between two civilizations. One is Western civilization, developed over centuries from Hellenic thought through periods of painful trial and error and historical evolution. The other is Islamic civilization, rooted in metaphysics and mysticism, dogma and blind faith. The former seeks to repair the errors of the past by securing the rights and freedoms of all individuals for the future. The latter seeks a return to the past, to 7th century Arabia, and to impose its will upon all mankind.

These two civilizations are mutually exclusive. There can be no peace or coexistence between them; Islam will not allow it. If America is to recover its greatness and its hope, every American must decide which of the two civilizations he will support.

¹ Quoted in Babbin, *In the Words of Our Enemies*, 22.

² Bush, "Statement to the United Nations General Assembly."

³ Culbertson, "NASA Radio Address."

⁴ *Qur'an* 33:21.

⁵ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 4:53:386.

⁶ *Ibid*, 5:59:611.

⁷ Culbertson, "Letter."

⁸ Davis, "TSA Stands by Adult Diaper Check."

⁹ Russia Today, "18-month-old baby yanked from airplane for being on no-fly list."

¹⁰ Krauthammer, "Don't touch my junk."

¹¹ Carter and Cox, "One 9/11 Tally: \$3.3 Trillion."

¹² White House, "Budget," 28.

¹³ Amadeo, "How the 9/11 Attacks Still Affect the Economy Today."

¹⁴ RAND Corporation, "Compensating the Victims of 9/11."

¹⁵ IATA, "The Impact of September 11 2001 on Aviation," 3.

¹⁶ FDIC, "The New York City Economy: Post 9/11."

¹⁷ New York Small Business Development Center, "Disaster Recovery."