9/11: The Social, Financial And Cultural Impact

September 11, 2001 saw the world's deadliest terrorist attacks in history, involving the hijacking of four United States (US) jetliners. Orchestrated by 19 al-Qaeda terrorists, a series of coordinated attacks occurred in New York (NY) at 8:45am. The impacts of 9/11, have become evident in the years following, and are reflected in the social, financial and cultural framework of the US. The social implications include the significant loss of life, and the 'War on Terror'; ingraining a deep fear within society, reflected in safety protocol alterations. The US economy was immediately impacted, with the stock market plummeting and significant costs as the result of the physical damage caused by the attack. The cultural framework of America suffered immensely post 2001, with a notable increase in immigration policies, related to the changing view on religion.

The 9/11 attacks killed 2,979 people, and wounded 10,000 others, which had a considerable impact on the social framework of the US. DaShanne Stokes, a scholar of politics and culture, stated, 'When nearly 3,000 people died on 9/11, it was enough to create a massive change in our society.' The 'War on Terror', which was announced on September 20, 2001 in a speech delivered to congress by President Bush in direct response to the attacks, had a marked impact on US society. Bush declared that 'Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.' The 'War on Terror' highlighted an ingrained fear of terrorism in US citizens, following the most significant terrorist attack in history. Operation Enduring Freedom was announced on October 7, 2001 when the US congress elected to fight in Afghanistan. The Afghanistan War continued until 2014, when the US and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation withdrew their involvement. More than 2,300 US soldiers died in combat in Afghanistan, and another 4,424 soldiers died in Operation Iraqi Freedom, which had begun in 2003. As a result of this combat 970,000 US soldiers were disabled. In addition, the attacks resulted in increased airport and general security which also had a significant impact on the social framework of the US. 'The biggest and most visible changes after 9/11 were to airport security,' according to Christian Alexandersen, a journalist. The Transportation Security Administration was created two months after 9/11, ensuring cockpit doors were strengthened with bulletproof material, and gaps were minimised between doors. 'A clear success' of the administration was that pilots were locked in the cockpit throughout the flight, and during bathroom breaks, specially trained air hostesses would protect the doors. The 'Federal Flight Deck Officer' program was also introduced following 9/11, which allowed pilots to carry a gun after following training protocols. Changes to the broader airline industry were also evident following 9/11. In 2001, there was less than 20,000 screeners at airports, who were poorly trained and worked on minimum wage. Currently there are over 42,000 screeners in the US, all of which are federal employees represented by a union. Furthermore, US air marshals have increased from less than 100 in 2001, to 5,000 in 2016. Finally, additional changes to safety in the US which have impacted the social framework, included the creation of a surveillance state, with increased efforts both in and out of the US. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), formed in March 2003, brought 22 agencies together, including the US Coast Guard and US Customs Service, with the foundation of 'protecting the American people from terrorist and other threats'. This saw the creation of the 'If You See Something Say Something' campaign, raising social awareness to signs of terrorism and crime, making clear the importance of reporting suspicious acts.

The financial impacts were some of the most significant following the terror attacks on NY, with the economy faltering and costing the US trillions. A 2011 report by the New York Times revealed that 9/11 cost the US $3.3 trillion, with physical damages standing at $55 billion. The New York Comptroller's Office 2002 reported that $24 billion was the generated estimated income loss of people killed in 9/11, with another $14 billion in damage to the World Trade Complex and surrounding buildings, including clean up. Additional expenses included $5 billion to treat the wounded, $6 billion to repair the subway and utilities, and $6 billion to replace cars, furniture and computers. However, physical damage was only a small portion of the total financial impact on the US. The cost to fund the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq stand at $1,649 billion, with another $867 billion required for future war and veterans' care. The cost of funding Homeland Security is $589 billion. There were also significant immediate financial implications of 9/11, with the stock market shut for four days, reopening on September 17. This was the first time the market had shut since the Great Depression, when President Roosevelt closed the exchange for two days in March 1933, attempting to stop a bank run. When the market reopened after the attacks, the Dow Jones Industrial Average plummeted 7.13 percent, closing at 8,920.70, the worst one day drop in history, deepening the 2001 recession. The Average, however, successfully recovered by October 2001. The final area of significant cost was the $5 billion loss to the airline industry. At 9:45am on September 11, the FAA closed all US airports for the first time in history, resulting in a $1.4 billion loss after a four day closure. In 2002, one in six US citizens reduced their air travel as they were 'afraid of flying for at least a year'. This resulted in 1,000 planes grounded throughout 2002, with thousands of workers forced to take leave as jobs were scarce. Consequently President Bush approved $15 billion in federal loans on September 22, 2001, to aid the industry, in an attempt to ease some of the financial strain following 9/11.

The cultural framework of the US significantly changed after the attacks by 19 Muslim jihadists, with those having Muslim and Islamic beliefs, blamed and targeted. On September 15, 2001, Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh-American man, was shot and killed in Arizona; having been incorrectly presumed Muslim when wearing a turban. Some 50% of US Muslims declared it more challenging to maintain their faith since 9/11. In 2000, only 12 assaults on Muslims were recorded, however, by late 2001, the FBI reported 93 anti-Muslim assaults. Some 15 years after 9/11, 127 assaults on Muslim people were recorded, confirming that the day that changed the world, changed the lives of 3.45 million people. Changes to the cultural basis of America were also evident when people of colour spoke of heightened racially and religiously motivated attacks. In 2014, 'the number of anti-Muslim crimes rose 14 percent over the previous year', showing the sustained feelings toward Muslims. Charles Kammer, a religion professor at the College of Wooster in Ohio, described this as, 'an anti-Islamic crusade that has helped to generate a climate of hatred and distrust toward all Muslims.' This 'hatred and distrust toward all Muslims', could also be blamed for changes to US immigration laws. According to the Pew Research Centre, there were an estimated 189,000 deportations in 2001 prior to the attacks, compared to 438,000 in 2013. 'The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have moulded an immigration system that is dominated by national security and border-control considerations', as reported by the Migration Policy Institute 2011. The Institute outlined changes to immigration in the US, beginning a year after the attacks. The Enforcement Initiative Geared at 'Priority Absconders', was developed in January 2002. The US Department of Justice labelled thousands of men who were from al-Qaeda based countries as 'priority absconders'. A month later, federal anti-terrorism officials interrogated unauthorised immigrants who had ignored deportation requests, prosecuting those with terrorism links. The National Security Entry-Exit Registration System was another protocol introduced in 2002. The registration system was

designed for non-citizens of the US, particularly those from Muslim countries, ascertained to be a risk to national security, the majority of which were male and were forced to be fingerprinted, photographed and interviewed. Furthermore, the Institute detailed the Operation of Liberty Shield, a short initiative developed by the DHS in March 2003, demanding the detention of asylum seekers from 33 countries where al-Qaeda had been known to operate. Many other immigration policies were introduced, and continue to be developed, highlighting the long-term impacts to the cultural framework of America.

The social, financial and cultural aspects that help to construct the basis of the US were dramatically impacted in the days and years following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. From a social perspective, the loss of life as a result of the attacks had an immediate impact, and the resulting ‘War on Terror’ brought the entire country together in a sustained fight against terrorism. The attacks engendered a fear of terrorism in US society, which the government attempted to allay with tightened security protocols to increase safety for US citizens. From a financial perspective, the US felt immediate and significant impacts from the attacks, from the loss of life and property, a sudden decline in the stock market and then longer-term costs due to the sustained military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Finally, from a cultural perspective, changes to immigration laws mirrored the evolving view of religion in the US, with an increasing number of religious motivated attacks occurring. Therefore it can be seen that the New York terrorist attacks had a significant impact on the social, financial and cultural framework of the US.