

SECTION 1: LOOKING BEYOND THE COLD WAR

In the 1980s, Premier **Mikhail Gorbachev** (1985-1991) of the Soviet Union believed the USSR had to make dramatic changes if the country was going to avoid economic collapse. Economically speaking, the Soviets used a **command-style economy**—the Communist Party dictated what was produced, how much, etc. instead of letting the free market determine what was needed. The command economy approach created employment; yet, it was notoriously inefficient: while the country’s industrial sector might meet a planned target, like producing 10,000 tractors within five years, there was never a guarantee a market could be found for the machines.

Capitalism, on the other hand, an economic system whereby the free market—or the **forces of supply and demand**—dictated what was profitable and what was not was comparatively much more efficient in terms of promoting economic growth. For example, most people have probably heard of the Apple iPod but much fewer would have heard of Microsoft’s Zune player. This is because the market—made up of consumers who spend money on a product—make the decision to favor the one product over the other. In other words, the free market (and not the government) decides who the winners and losers are; therefore, in order to prevent economic and political collapse Gorbachev introduced two fundamental reforms to the Soviet Union: glasnost and perestroika.

The reform **glasnost** (literally meaning “openness” in Russian) gave people fundamental civil and civic rights, e.g. freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of conscience, freedom of the press, freedom to establish and belong to a political party other than the Communist Party. These fundamental rights were suppressed during the time of Stalin. Gorbachev hoped glasnost would encourage a more efficient and meaningful political process. The second measure was an economic reform called **perestroika** (literally meaning “economic restructuring”). Perestroika led to the introduction of **capitalism and free markets**¹ to the USSR.² Ultimately, **Gorbachev was trying to revitalize the USSR by modernizing it. Instead, he unwittingly unleashed forces eventually destroying the USSR.**³



Once Gorbachev introduced genuine freedom and liberty, the whole Soviet system came crashing down by 1991. This left the United States as the world’s sole **superpower**.⁴ The Americans were presented with a unique opportunity to promote democracy abroad without any more interference from the Soviets. For this reason the **Cold War’s**⁵ end encouraged a brief period of optimism in the

¹ Capitalism is an economic system where citizens own businesses and determine what is bought and sold on the free market. The free market is the place where the prices for goods and services are determined by consumer demand (not government).

² These reforms were necessary because the country was basically bankrupt in the 1980s due to massive spending on the arms race; it needed an economic and political system capable of creating wealth. The Soviet Union also needed peace if it was to survive. Gorbachev, therefore, entered into a series of discussions with the Americans about reducing their stockpiles of nuclear weapons. These discussions led to the Soviets and Americans signing the **Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (START)**. START significantly reduced the number of nuclear weapons kept by both countries. Regrettably, since 9/11 both countries are replenishing their nuclear arsenals.

³ Stalin was not cruel just to be cruel: he had to use cruelty to prop up communism in Russia because reasonable people do not, if given the choice, choose to live under a dictatorship as opposed to a free society. Once Gorbachev gave people fundamental freedoms the basis of maintaining communism in Russia—fear, intimidation, concentration camps—disappeared. The Soviet Union itself disappeared soon thereafter.

⁴ The United States and Soviet Union were the sole super powers during the cold war period, i.e. they had the two largest nuclear arsenals and led their respective alliances (America led NATO and the Soviet Union led the Warsaw Pact).

⁵ The Cold War began essentially right after World War II and lasted until 1991. The Soviets and Americans never fought one another directly during this period. Instead, the two superpowers fought one another indirectly through a series “proxy wars”, e.g. when the Soviet Union was fighting Afghanistan the United States supported the Afghan resistance. A **proxy war** is instigated by a major power that does not itself become involved but rather fights vicariously through others, e.g. Korean War (USSR fought America through the North Koreans), Vietnam War (China fought the Americans through the North Vietnamese), Soviet-Afghan War (Americans fought the Soviets by supporting Afghan resistance fighters).

West⁶ because a decades' long suicidal arms race between the Americans and Soviets was finally over.

Needless to say, the world has gotten much more interesting since the disappearance of the USSR. In particular, America was justifiably concerned about Russia's nuclear weapons falling in to the wrong hands: for example, the former Soviet republics of **Kazakhstan and Ukraine literally became nuclear superpowers overnight**. The United States was worried desperate people in these new and politically unstable countries might sell these weapons for profit (which is precisely what happened); and if these weapons fell into the hands of terrorists they might be used in attacks against cities like New York, London or Paris. In 2009 **two Ukrainian businessmen acquired and tried selling 3.5 kg of enriched plutonium on the black market**. This was no isolated incident: according to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) governments of the former Soviet republics have uncovered and prevented at least 827 attempts involving the illegal sale of plutonium; it is unlikely all attempts to smuggle fissile material⁷ out of the Soviet Union were prevented.

There are four scenarios under which a nuclear weapon could be used by terrorists (see graphics on below):



1. The theft and detonation of an intact nuclear weapon at a military nuclear facility.



2. The theft or purchase of fissile material leading to the creation and detonation of an improvised nuclear device (IND).



3. Attacks against and sabotage of nuclear facilities, in particular nuclear power plants, causing the release of radioactivity.



4. The unauthorized acquisition of radioactive materials contributing to the detonation of a "dirty bomb."

⁶ Whenever the phrase "the West" is used it is in reference to the following countries in the western hemisphere, e.g. France, Germany, Britain, Canada, Scandinavia, Spain, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, and the United States. These western countries are all liberal democracies.

⁷ Fissile materials are used to create nuclear weapons or power atomic energy plants.

The main growth in demand for plutonium is coming from the Middle East and North Africa. Three states—Iraq, Iran and Libya—have either attempted to develop nuclear weapons in the past or have successfully established an atomic energy program in the present (Iran). With that said, it is comparatively easier to deal with nation states developing nuclear weapons programs than small groups of zealous terrorists willing to exchange their lives for the lives of millions.

There are several reasons why terrorists are searching for fissile material: firstly, there is a centuries' long struggle within Islam between **Sunnis and Shi'ites**⁸; it is possible that members from one or the other group wants to deal a devastating blow to the other; secondly, terrorists might try and leverage, or use a weapon as a bargaining chip, to gain concessions from a nation state's government; and thirdly, some terrorists would use the weapon to start a war between the secular West and the Islamic world (or to place it in religious terms, a fight between the forces of light and darkness). The West is a major target for **Jihadists**.⁹ This is because many Muslims do not appreciate the West's interference in the economic and political affairs of North Africa, Asia and the Middle East.¹⁰



Recent Western aggression in Afghanistan (1978 to present)¹¹ and Iraq (1990 to present)¹² has de-stabilized and contributed to the **radicalization**¹³ of people in these countries while reminding the Arab World of the long history of Western imperialism.¹⁴ This reminder is one factor contributing to the radicalization of Muslims going on to join groups like **ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria)**. However, people do not always join groups like ISIS out of religious, national or political conviction; it might seem odd but **many joined ISIS for the promise of employment**.

Specifically, ISIS was one of the leading employers in Iraq and Syria (two countries where unemployment, especially among the young, is rampant). **So, in other words, many people joined ISIS because they needed a job.** This is not a phenomenon unique to the rise of the Islamic State. For example, Palestinians (living in Israel) have lived in a sort of national limbo since Israel was created in 1948; they do not have their own country despite having lived in the area since at least the 2nd century CE; and the economic prospects for young

⁸ The Sunni and Shi'ite conflict traces back to the time of the death of the prophet Muhammed (632 AD). A dispute over who should succeed Muhammed as caliph (leader) of the Islamic community took place. Sunnis believed the next caliph should have been the prophet's wife's father; however, Shias argued Muhammed's son-in-law was the rightful heir. Ultimately, the Sunni's candidate was selected as caliph and the two groups have been fighting ever since.

⁹ The word *jihad* literally means "holy war" in Arabic. Jihadists are people who want to make war against the perceived enemies of God (or "Allah"). Groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS are jihadists.

¹⁰ In History 20, we studied the "age of imperialism" (1880-1914). During this time, European countries competed with one another for overseas colonies in Africa and Asia; however, following the fall of the Ottoman Empire following their defeat in World War I, the countries of Britain and France redrew the map of the Middle East creating Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, Iran, and Lebanon. France and Britain then proceeded to exploit the resources of these new countries. England and France never did recover from World War II. Instead, their influence and presence in the Middle East, etc. was replaced by the Americans and Soviets.

¹¹ The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1978 in an attempt to prop up a puppet government friendly to the USSR. The Afghan-Soviet War lasted from 1978 until 1988. Following the defeat of the Soviets, Afghanistan fell into a civil war in which former allies fought with one another for control of the government (a conservative Islamic group called the Taliban won the civil war and ran the country until the United States invaded the country in 2001 in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks on September 11th, 2001).

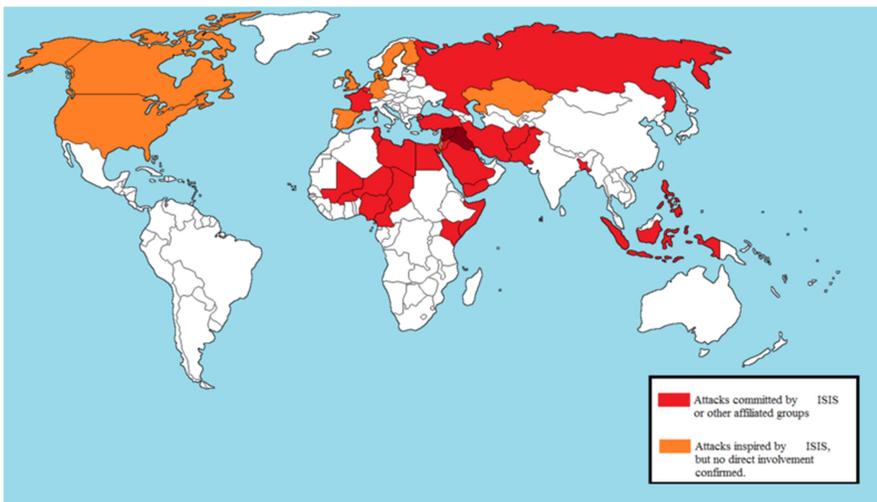
¹² There have been a total of three wars involving the United States and Iraq: the First Gulf War (1990-1991), President Clinton ordered Iraq bombed in 1998, and the Iraq War starting in 2003 continuing until December 2017 when ISIS was finally defeated.

¹³ Radicalization is the action or process of causing someone to adopt radical (or extremist) positions on political or social issues.

¹⁴ Christian armies invaded the Middle East in the early 12th century in what became known as "The Crusades". George W. Bush, the president of the United States at the time of 9/11, actually used the phrase "we are on a 'crusade' against evil" when he tried to convince the United Nations and American People to go to war against Afghanistan. The choice of expression did not go over so well in the Arab World for obvious reasons.

Palestinians are not great. Some people agree to become suicide bombers for groups like **Hamas**¹⁵ in exchange for their families being taken care of financially; moreover, the Syrian Civil War was also in part caused by mass unemployment among young people. **Thus, the causes of terrorism are complex ranging from economic desperation, religious conviction to reactions to Western imperialism.**

ISIS uses social media to spread its message and gain followers; it even publishes a magazine to communicate with the public; and it is primarily through its various publications ISIS has convinced some individuals to undertake so-called “**lone wolf attacks**.”¹⁶ For example, two such attacks resulted in the death of two Canadian soldiers in Quebec and Ontario in October, 2014. These attacks were carried out by two Canadian citizens who were recent converts to Islam. **These inspired a French Canadian man (a young right wing, white supremacist) to kill six Muslims in a mosque in Quebec City in January, 2017.** In 2015 a husband and wife attacked and killed 14 of their co-workers in what appeared to be a random attack in San Bernardino, California; and there were a series of attacks in England, France, Germany and the United States in 2016 and 2017 where lone Muslim extremists used large vehicles to run people over indiscriminately. The attack on Nice, France in July of 2016 was particularly bloody as 84 people were run down by a member of ISIS driving a large semi-trailer. The final lone wolf attack of 2017 took place in Melbourne, Australia on December 20th when 19 people were injured by a man driving a large van into a crowd of pedestrians. The list of attacks presented above is by no means comprehensive.



The Rise of ISIS

The group’s origins are traceable back to as early as the late 90s; however, they gained notoriety when they finally joined with Al Qaeda in 2004.

ISIS’s leader, **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, declared a so-called “Islamic State” into existence in in April, 2013. **ISIS was considered too radical by al Qaeda and eventually pushed out of the movement.**

ISIS took advantage of the political and economic instability in Syria and Iraq to

acquire territory. By early 2016 ISIS controlled about a quarter of Syria and one-third of Iraq; however, by early December 2017 the Iraqi army captured the last remaining city in ISIS’s control.

ISIS claimed to have authority over every single Muslim worldwide in what they call a world-wide **caliphate**.¹⁷ Since its defeat in Iraq in 2017, ISIS has been trying to expand its influence in North Africa, e.g. Libya, Egypt, and Algeria. ISIS has **terrorist cells**¹⁸ all over the world that are responsible for many attacks both in and outside of the Muslim world (see list on next page). Ultimately, the final defeat of ISIS’s armies in Iraq and Syria in December 2017 was a “mixed blessing”: since ISIS will no longer be focused on acquiring or holding territory, it

¹⁵ Hamas is the largest of several Palestinian militant Islamist groups; it emerged in 1987 as part of a Palestinian uprising against Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

¹⁶ A lone wolf, lone-wolf terrorist, or lone actor, is someone who prepares and commits violent acts alone, outside of any command structure and without material assistance from any group.

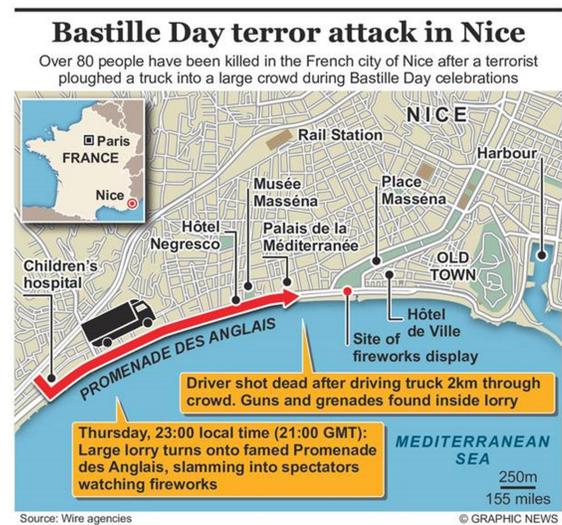
¹⁷ A caliphate is an area ruled by a caliph (the traditional Arabic name for a chief Muslim ruler).

¹⁸ The word “cell” is used by political theorists to describe a small group of terrorists who hide, plan and organize in secret. There are cells for virtually every terrorist organization in every country in the world.

is believed the number of so-called “**lone wolf attacks**”¹⁹ will increase around the world as fighters return to their home countries to continue waging *Jihad* (holy war) against the West.

The following is a list (as of January 2018) of ISIS inspired or ISIS directed attacks. Please note that this list does not include all the attacks in Iraq since there are literally too many to list:

- Belgium (May 2014) four killed at the Jewish Museum of Belgium
- Australia (September 2014) 15 terrorists detained for planning on kidnapping a random Australian citizen and executing them
- Canada (October 2014) two soldiers killed in two different attacks
- Libya (January 2015) ten killed in the Corinthia Hotel attack
- Denmark (February 2015) two killed in the Copenhagen shootings
- Tunisia (March 2015) 22 killed in a mass shooting at the Bardo National Museum
- Yemen (March 2015) 142 killed in the bombings of two Shi’a mosques in Sana’a
- Kuwait (June 2015) 27 killed in the bombing of a Shi’a mosque in Kuwait City
- Tunisia (June 2015) 38 killed as Westerners are targeted at a hotel in Port El Kantaoui
- France (November 2015) 130 killed in Paris at several locations due to gunfire and bombs
- Belgium (March 2016) 32 killed at a metro station and an airport
- United States (June 2016) 49 killed in the Orlando nightclub shooting
- France (July 2016, see graphic to right) an ISIS inspired man drove a semi-truck into crowds of people in Nice killing 86



The list goes on and on and on. If you consult a comprehensive list of ISIS attacks, the majority of deaths take place in Muslim countries (not Western ones) and specifically target Shi’a Muslims.

SECTION 2: The New Terrorism

Some political theorists and historians argue terrorism today differs from what came before. For example, in 1914 groups like the Black Hand²⁰ did not typically target civilians; rather, they focused on killing political leaders like monarchs and presidents or blew up buildings regarded as symbols of oppression. Thus, the Black Hand was largely motivated out of a nationalist desire to achieve Serbian independence from Austria-Hungary. Religion certainly was not a factor. **Terrorists today appear to be motivated out of a combination of nationalism, political conviction and religion**, e.g. the attack on a Quebec City mosque on Muslims was in part inspired by the attacker’s Christian religious conviction. Another factor making the new terrorism different is the types of targets terrorists are hitting.

¹⁹ The phrase “lone wolf attacks” refers to terrorist actions undertaken by individuals (or small groups) who in their own way answer the call of ISIS for people to hit cities and citizens living in the West. Lone wolf attacks do not just take place against Western countries; they also take place in Muslim countries. The two attacks in Canada (October, 2014) were both lone wolf attacks. ISIS has made effective use of YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and other forms of social media to sell their ideas and convince people to take up arms against the “oppressors.”

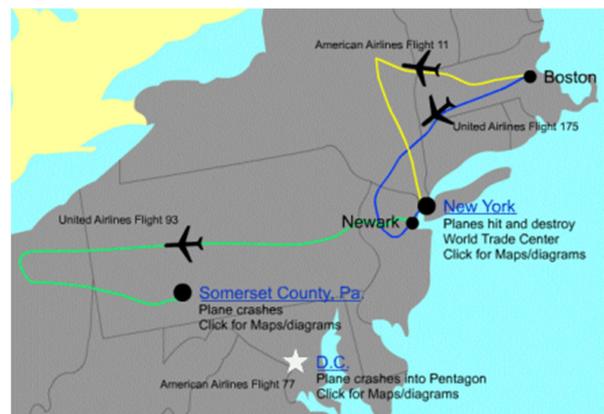
²⁰ This is the group that killed the Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 setting off the Great War.

Muslim extremist groups like **al Qaeda**, **Boko Haram**²¹ and **ISIS** actually make a point of attacking so-called “**soft-targets**” like schools, movie theatres, public streets and restaurants. This new generation of terrorist is also more organized (because of the Internet), better funded, and deeply fanatical.²²

There is no way to entirely end terrorism. The world will always suffer from the presence and actions of uncompromising people and fanatics; yet, **the number of terror attacks can be minimized if Western countries change the existing narrative.**²³ Specifically, there’s a feeling among many African, Arabian and Asian people that they have been exploited and mistreated by Western countries during the last 100 or so years. There is some truth to this, in that, if you look at the long history of England, France, and Germany colonizing non-European countries it becomes easier to understand why some terrorists believe violence against citizens of the West is justifiable. For example, the Belgian occupation of Congo contributed directly to the death of over ten million Congolese people.²⁴ If Western nations change the way they deal with Arab and African countries then some of the reasons (or causes) of becoming radicalized (or terrorists) disappear; this is because changing the way we interact with one another changes the story and opens up new possibilities (one of the possibilities being peace). So, changing the narrative from “the West exploits and oppresses us” to “the West cooperates and treats us as equals” profoundly changes the narrative; that is, **if terrorism is at least partly caused by the West’s historically poor treatment of the Muslim world, it stands to reason ending that interference should at least reduce terrorism in some measure.**

SECTION 3: September 11 and the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq

Muslim extremists belonging to a terrorist movement called **al Qaeda** launched a series of coordinated terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11th, 2001. The lead organizer and financier of the World Trade Center attacks was the al Qaeda’s leader, **Osama bin Laden**. Terrorists hijacked a total of four planes with the intent of crashing them into the **World Trade Center**, the **Pentagon**, and the **White House**. Approximately 3,000 Americans and foreign nationals were killed in the attacks. This attack led to **NATO’s** invasion of **Afghanistan** in **2001** and the American invasion of **Iraq (2003)**. The Americans invaded Afghanistan



²¹ Boko Haram literally means “books are bad” in Arabic. Some people join radical Islamist groups because they hate secularism and modernity, e.g. open borders, human rights, respect for LGBTQ+ people, and a dislike for modern science because it places into question ancient religious beliefs. Boko Haram is largely based in Nigeria and its name reveals its members’ fundamental distrust of non-religion (specifically non-Islamic) knowledge.

²² A war against terrorism is really a war against an *idea* or *worldview*. Not everyone thinks of the United States as the “good guys” or defenders of liberty and freedom. There are people in countries in Africa, Asia, South and Central America, and the Middle East (even the West), etc. who all have had negative experiences with American imperialism; and to be fair many don’t like either France, Germany or Britain either because these imperial powers were the first out of the gate when it came to establishing colonies and exploiting Asians, Arabs and Africans. Terrorism in the 21st century is in many respects one of the lasting legacies of the colonialism and imperialism of the 19th and 20th centuries.

²³ Every civilization has a foundational myth (answering how a society started), a sustaining myth (a story explaining why society is the way it is) and a future myth (telling society’s members why they are going the direction they are). In the case of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, they are not exactly happy with Western countries, e.g. it was England, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy, etc. who established colonies in Africa, Asia and the Middle East (not the other way around); it was these same Western countries—along with the United States—whose imperial policies in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries contributed to the oppression of Africans (e.g. Belgians killing ten million Congolese), Asians and Middle-Easterners. Thus, terrorists can appeal to an origin myth (the West meddled with us) and a sustaining myth (the West continues to meddle with us) to justify future action—we must compel them through violence to leave us alone because they won’t do it voluntarily.

²⁴ A key example of brutal colonial rule was found in the Belgian Congo, which from 1885, amounted to a slave state where Africans were worked to death in rubber plantations. This regime’s death toll is estimated at ten million, roughly half the country. Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, “Utopia and Terror in the 20th Century” (lecture, University of Tennessee) drawn from *The Great Courses*, Episode 3.

because the **Taliban**, the name for the country's ruling regime, was believed to be protecting and supporting bin Laden.²⁵

Al Qaeda is not so much an organization as it is a movement:²⁶ they want to remove all unwanted foreign (outside) influence on Arab/Islamic countries. The nominal leader of the movement, Osama bin Laden, actually offered the Americans a "cease fire" if they completely left Saudi Arabia (the home of Islam's holiest city, **Medina**). The Americans are allies of the ruling family of Saudi Arabia and maintain a military presence in the country. Between 1991 and 1996 al Qaeda organized or took direct part in several major terrorist attacks.

- 1991: Al Qaeda bombs a hotel in Aden, Yemen (targeting foreigners).
- 1993: attempted to blow up the World Trade Center; an attack was also planned on the New York subway but was prevented.
- Mid 1990s: establish training camps for Al Qaeda in the Sudan.
- 1994: blow up an airplane from the Philippines.
- 1998: Al Qaeda operatives carried out bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- 2000: successful attack on the USS Cole (a ship stationed in Aden, Yemen).
- 2001: attack of the World Trade Center, Pentagon, etc. (9/11).
- 2002: tourists killed in Bali, Indonesia.
- 2003: Istanbul bombings.
- 2004: Super Ferry bombings in the Philippines.
- 2004: Madrid train bombings.
- 2004: Khobar Massacre in Saudi Arabia.
- 2005: London transport bombings (see image to the right, also called the **7/7 attacks**).



Al Qaeda has no formal hierarchy but recruits field operatives to work independently in support of its goals. Al Qaeda's size has never numbered more than in the 100s; however, it is likely it has tens of thousands of sympathetic supporters. Al Qaeda ultimately wanted to end all Western influence in Muslim countries and create an **Islamic Caliphate** (something ISIS tried to accomplish in 2013). **On May 2nd, 2011, members of America's Special Forces dropped in on a house in Pakistan where bin Laden was thought to be hiding.** A short gun battle ensued and bin Laden was shot and killed.

²⁵ The Taliban was a super conservative regime which ruled through the Koran and sharia law. The Taliban was decidedly anti-Western in their outlook and for this reason were sympathetic to al Qaeda.

²⁶ Al Qaeda does not have a central leadership; it has no formal structure to it. People like Osama bin Laden got their message out using social media. For this reason it is more of an idea or movement, i.e. al Qaeda inspires similar thinking individuals to take out their anger on perceived enemies of Islam.

members.) This is why Canada joined the United States in Afghanistan but did not join in the invasion of Iraq, i.e. Iraq never attacked the United States.

Technically speaking, Afghanistan did not strike the United States through the 9/11 attacks; however, the Taliban ruling regime was definitely hiding and supporting bin Laden. **The invasion of Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001. This marked the beginning of the Western World's so-called "War on Terror." The purpose of the invasion was to capture Osama bin Laden, destroy al Qaeda, and remove the Taliban regime and establish a democratic government in Afghanistan.**²⁹

In the initial stages, the NATO invasion was successful, e.g. the Taliban was removed from power; nevertheless, the Taliban was not destroyed. After several months the Taliban re-organized and counter attacked through the use of small scale skirmishes, assassinations, bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).³⁰ The majority of Canada's military fatalities were due to IEDs and not firefights. The Taliban was a difficult enemy to fight because they did not wear uniforms or fight on clearly marked frontlines. Instead, they used hit and run and guerilla warfare tactics. **In 2010, in an effort to bring the war to a successful close the Americans sent 33,000 additional troops from Iraq in to Afghanistan in what was called "the surge."** The surge was modestly successful; however, members of the Taliban continue to the present day to detonate bombs and assassinate its enemies in Afghanistan.

NATO successfully helped Afghanistan conduct its first democratic election in 2005. **Hamid Karzai** became the first democratically elected president in Afghanistan's history. Karzai was the leader of the interim government established by the United States following the successful removal of the Taliban in 2001. Afghanistan's government struggled to organize itself throughout 2005-2012. There are/were concerns that if NATO leaves the democratic government will be too weak to defend itself. As of December 2017 over 13,000 NATO troops remained in Afghanistan to support the government. The Taliban continues to pose a threat to any hope of Afghanistan's long-term prospects of maintaining a democratic society. The Taliban continues to receive financial support from neighboring Pakistan. Many Afghans also support the Taliban because they do not like the idea of their country being occupied by foreigners.

SECTION 5: The War in Iraq

The 9/11 attacks (also known as the "World Trade Center attacks") drew America's attention back to Iraq in 2003. The Americans had actually invaded Iraq in the early 1990s in a conflict that became known as the **First Gulf War** (1990-1991).³¹ The war ended inconclusively with Iraq's dictator, Saddam Hussein, remaining in power until the American invasion came 12 years later.

Publicly, the Americans feared Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and would give them to terrorists to strike the United States. In reality Iraq did not possess any WMDs and had nothing to do with 9/11. However, the American Government suggested Iraq's dictator **Saddam Hussein** was nonetheless actively supporting terrorists. There was no evidence presented by the United States, or any other nation, Iraq was actively supporting groups like al Qaeda. In reality, Hussein and his government were detested by men like Osama bin Laden. This is because Hussein was not a religious man and his government was secular: he actively suppressed religious groups in his country and for this reason was hated by Muslims. Also, Hussein was unpopular among many Muslims because he allied

²⁹ The invasion could achieve many of its goals, e.g. capture bin Laden, remove the Taliban and establish a democratic government; however, it is impossible to "destroy" al Qaeda because it is not an organization, it is an idea; and destroying an idea requires changing a person's mind, not blowing them up.

³⁰ An IED is an explosive device (bomb) made to look like something else, e.g. the Taliban made bombs look like rocks, garbage cans, even remote control cars.

³¹ Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait in the summer of 1990 touching off an international crisis. An American lead coalition pushed Iraq out of Kuwait during *Operation Desert Storm* and the war ended in 1991.

with the Americans against Iran during the **Iran-Iraq War** (1980-1988).³² So, again, the Iraqis had nothing to do whatsoever with 9/11; nonetheless, the Americans stated they publicly feared Hussein's regime of developing and possessing weapons of mass destruction (**WMDs**).³³ In reality Hussein possessed no WMDs.³⁴ Some critics of the Americans argued President Bush wanted to remove Hussein as a matter of principle, i.e. his father George H. W. Bush was president during the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the son wanted to complete the unfinished work of his father.

Nevertheless, the American and British governments fed the news agencies false information, i.e. Iraq was a threat they argued, it possessed WMDs they assured the public, and Hussein had to be removed from power. **Judith Miller, a reporter with the *New York Times*, is credited with changing the American public's attitude towards a potential war with Iraq.** Before an article she wrote promoting the idea of America invading Iraq, most Americans did not support a war against Iraq; however, after her article called "**Threats and Responses**" was published on September 8th, 2002, the American public overwhelmingly supported removing Hussein.³⁵ Thus, the Americans and British convinced their populations through propaganda an invasion of Iraq was necessary to prevent WMDs—in particular nuclear and biological weapons—from falling into the hands of groups like al Qaeda. American President **George W. Bush** (2001-2009) actually borrowed a phrase from Miller's article when he addressed the United Nations before the invasion of Iraq, e.g. The United States will not wait for a "mushroom cloud over Washington or New York" before dealing with the Iraqi threat. Thus, an American led coalition of nations invaded Iraq on March 20th, 2003. Countries like Germany and Canada did not participate because Iraq had not actually attacked the United States.

The Syrian Civil War, the Refugee Crisis & the Return of Populism in the West (2010 to present)

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq destabilized the Middle East; these conflicts encouraged the creation of ISIS and made it increasingly harder for other countries in the region to enjoy political or economic stability. For this reason the **Syrian Civil War** (2011-ongoing) began as part of the wider wave of 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.³⁶ The **Arab Spring**³⁷ was a democratic and reform-minded movement that swept across North Africa and the Middle East. Protests in Tunisia and Egypt resulted in these countries governments (dictatorships) being toppled; however, protests in Syria did not bring down the dictatorship of **Bashar al Assad** in Syria. Assad refused to give up power and the country descended into a civil war.

³² In 1978 the Iranian people rose up and removed from power the Shah (king) and set up their own independent government (ending American influence). The Shah was an ally of the Americans and, just like Hussein in Iraq; he placed strict controls on religious groups. When the people of Iran overthrew the Shah, the Americans were left without any influence in Iran. So they tried to punish the Iranians by encouraging Hussein (Iraq) to attack. The Americans supplied Iraq with weapons, money and intelligence.

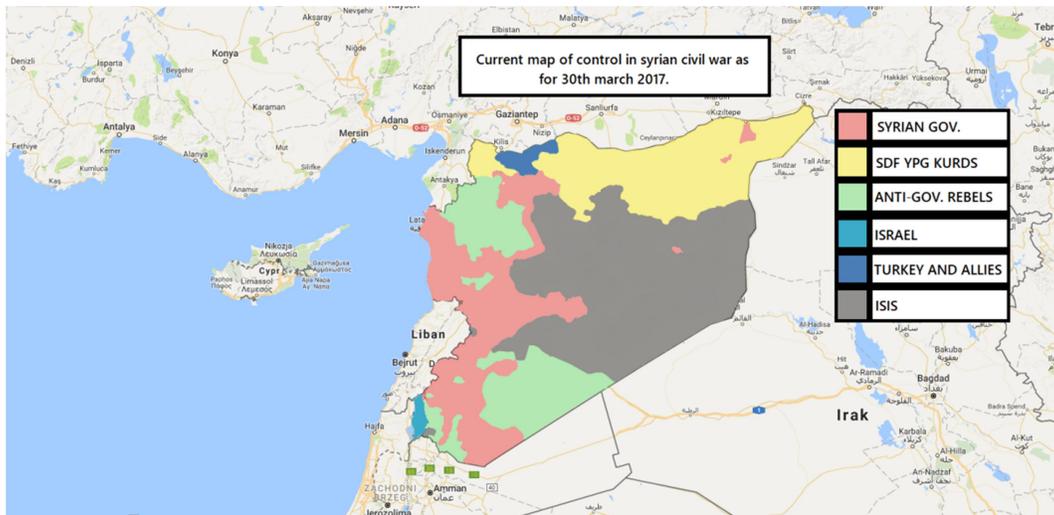
³³ Weapons of mass destruction are considered to be chemical, biological or radioactive weapons capable of causing widespread destruction.

³⁴ See Francis Rick's book *Fiasco: The American Adventure in Iraq* for more.

³⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/08/world/threats-responses-iraqis-us-says-hussein-intensifies-quest-for-bomb-parts.html>

³⁶ The Syrian Civil War is an ongoing multi-sided armed conflict fought mainly between the government of President Bashar al-Assad and various forces opposing the government.

³⁷ The Arab Spring began in 2010 with the Tunisian Revolution and spread to five other countries—Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain, etc. where either the ruling regime was toppled or major uprisings and social violence occurred (including civil wars and insurgencies).



Political protests in Syria coincided with the most intense drought ever recorded in the country lasting from 2006 to 2011. The drought displaced approximately 1.5 to 2 million Syrians who flocked to the country's cities in search of work and relief. The Syrian Civil War is regarded by some as a window to the future: a country destabilized by **climate change** descending into chaos forcing citizens in their millions to flee. **Approximately 1.5 million Syrians had left the country seeking asylum in both Europe and North America.** If the world does not do something meaningful about climate change, the frequency of war, terrorism, refugees/dislocation, etc. is likely to increase. **For this reason the Pentagon considers climate change to be the greatest long-term threat to the United States.**

The arrival of refugees from the Middle East is encouraging a rise in populist, anti-immigrant, and far right politics in Western countries. Far right political parties are either increasing in popularity or have been elected in Germany, Austria, France, Britain, Canada and the United States. Political parties are taking advantage of the fear their country's citizens have of the arrival of immigrants (particularly Muslims).³⁸ **The fear of immigrants in the West, along with continued attacks by al Qaeda and ISIS, has encouraged democracies to become less tolerant of diversity and to support more and more reactionary politicians like Donald Trump in the United States (2016).**

COVID-19 Pandemic

In early 2020, after a December 2019 outbreak in Wuhan, China, the World Health Organization identified SARS-CoV-2 as a new type of coronavirus. The outbreak quickly spread around the world. COVID-19 is a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that triggers a respiratory tract infection. Uncertainty around the virus' virulence and transmissibility compelled governments around the world to shut their economies down by requiring everyone to quarantine. The quarantine for the first wave started in March 2020 and ended at different times in different provinces as circumstances permitted. Over the course of the following year, the shut downs continued as provinces and cities tried to stem the spread of the virus.

Contentious Issues

The constant closures of businesses (and resultant problems) lead to public protests. The shut downs contributed to the closure of

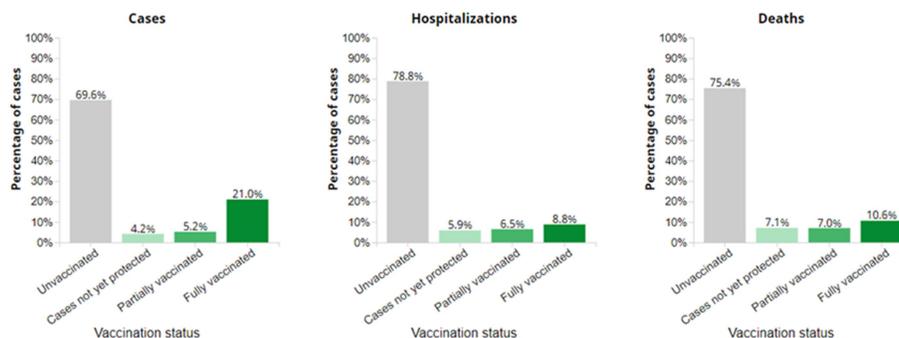
³⁸ Populism is a specific type of political movement where the "needs of the average person" are emphasized; however, what the average person needs is dictated to them by the politician (or political party) fighting for power. So, in reality, populist politics is in a lot of ways a competition between political parties in an election fighting to see who can exploit the fear and prejudice of its country's citizens best. In the History 20 course, we have studied in some detail one populist movement, e.g. The National Socialists (Nazis) of Germany in the 1930s. Not all populist movements necessarily lead a country to fascism; however, a rise in populism—along with fear of minorities and immigrants—is indeed a pre-condition for fascism to take root.

thousands of businesses Canada-wide. By May 2020 the unemployment rate rose from 5% to 13.7%. The situation improved by early 2022. For example by January of 2022 unemployment dropped to 5.9%. Nonetheless, some Canadians felt the public health measures taken by the Canadian Government were too drastic and violated fundamental freedoms. Governments justified closures by appealing to our ignorance around how the virus is transmitted. In April of 2020, some researchers believed COVID-19 was transmissible by air; however, it wasn't until late 2021 that this was scientifically proven. Thus, governments used a "circuit breaker" approach and shut down the economy to save lives.³⁹

A second issue of contention followed the Canadian Government's approval of the use of mRNA vaccines made by biotech companies Pfizer and Moderna. Some people were concerned the vaccines were rushed into production and weren't safe. Most people got their information from the Internet where they were exposed to a lot of misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation occurs when someone doesn't entirely understand a concept and then they transmit their incorrect understanding to others. For example people were claiming the mRNA vaccines were a form of genetic engineering or gene therapy. In reality the vaccines do not affect a person's DNA. Instead, mRNA vaccines do what traditional vaccines do; that is, they confer resistance upon a person by providing information to that person's immune system so that system recognizes and fights an invading virus. MRNA vaccines, however, are different from traditional vaccines: traditional vaccines use a dead (inactive) piece of the actual virus to encourage the body to have an immune response. Through the immune response a person's body learns to recognize and fight a virus. The mRNA vaccine skips a step and, instead of using the virus itself to provide information to your immune system, it just provides the information the body needs to resist infection. Another example of misinformation about the mRNA vaccine is that they were rushed into production. In reality, the mRNA technology was first developed in the early 1990s. Also, the vaccines used in 2021 and 2022 were developed in 2004 following the outbreak of SARS-CoV-1 (a precursor to COVID-19). In terms of disinformation, some Internet sites were trying to convince people the vaccine would make you infertile within ten years or that "the government" (or Bill Gates specifically) was trying to "chip you" so they could control you and always know your whereabouts.

Research suggests mRNA vaccines aren't any more dangerous than conventional vaccines like the MMR vaccine given to six month olds. The reality is a person is much more likely to die, or develop complications, from being infected by the SARS-CoV-2 virus itself than from receiving an mRNA vaccine (14 times more likely). The chart below is taken from a Government of Canada website: <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/epidemiological-summary-covid-19-cases.html#a9>.

Figure 5. Distribution of confirmed COVID-19 cases reported to PHAC by vaccination status as of December 25, 2021



³⁹ A circuit breaker approach means shutting down the entire economy. For example plugging too many appliances into an outlet in your house can lead to the breaker in the circuit box going off. When a breaker goes off it stops the flow of power to the outlet.

Between Dec 2020 and Dec 2021 about 80% of people hospitalized, and 76% of total deaths, were from the unvaccinated cohorts. This is remarkable given how small the unvaccinated cohort is relative to the vaccinated population. In December 2020 about 76% of Canadians were double vaccinated. This means the unvaccinated cohort was only 1/4 the size of the vaccinated (but they accounted for 80% of hospitalizations and 76 of fatalities). The number of unvaccinated Canadians dropped to 14% as of January 2022; they still accounted for the majority of new infections, hospitalizations, etc.