

# **Researching 9/11 and Beyond: Current Knowledge and Future Directions**

*Dr Piers Robinson*

*Research Director, International Center for 9/11 Justice*

## **Executive Summary**

What follows is an attempt to define a research agenda for the ongoing study of 9/11 and related events. The aim of this agenda is to deepen our understanding of 9/11 and its consequences and to develop a broader understanding of the ways in which power is exercised in the contemporary world. This paper has been developed from the [research agenda](#) recently published by the International Center for 9/11 Justice and is intended as a living document that will be regularly updated in light of feedback and as significant research developments emerge.

### *Understanding the 9/11 event*

- The official investigations upon which the official 9/11 narrative rests — the 9/11 Commission Report and the National Institute of Standards and Technology reports on the destruction of WTC 1, 2 and 7 — are all demonstrably flawed.
- The most likely explanation for the complete destruction of WTC 1, 2 and 7 is that of demolition planned prior to 9/11.
- Multiple inconsistencies afflict the official narrative regarding the alleged hijackers, including with respect to their alleged movements and religiosity. Continued research into the history, behavior and activities of the alleged hijackers is warranted.
- Multiple anomalies with respect to phone calls reportedly made by people onboard flights AA11, AA77, UA175 and UA93 indicate that they were not authentic.
- It is highly unlikely the hijacked aircraft could have been flown by the alleged individuals in the manner claimed by US authorities. Further investigation is necessary into the supposed training and competencies of the alleged hijackers, the complexity of the flight maneuvers and their feasibility for the alleged hijackers, and the possible role of remote guidance technology.

- **Developing a plausible and evidence-based account of what actually transpired with respect to the four airliners is a research priority.**
- **Multiple inconsistencies regarding key military and political officials, compelling evidence of insider trading prior to 9/11, multiple training exercises, and the 2001 anthrax attacks, all provide substantial circumstantial evidence that 9/11 was planned and executed by persons connected to the US government.**
- **Continued research into 9/11-related financial crimes, military training exercises, and politically exploited acts of bioterrorism, or threats thereof, is necessary.**
- **Further research is necessary regarding the possible involvement of other state and non-state actors including the roles of Saudi, UAE, Kuwaiti, British, and Israeli officials, corporations, and persons.**
- **The most plausible proximal explanation for 9/11 is that a belligerent and expansionist neoconservative political block instigated and then exploited the event in order to initiate a series of major wars in the international system.**

*Wider geopolitical and domestic consequences of 9/11 and deep events*

- **The ‘structural deep event’ (SDE) and ‘state crimes against democracy’ (SCAD) concepts provide a basis for conceptually grounded and rigorous academic analysis of both the 9/11 event and its wider consequences.**
- **Existing academic research on the ‘global war on terror’ that ensued 9/11, and the multiple conflicts fought under that banner, is severely limited because of its failure to properly understand what happened on 9/11 and its propensity to engage in insufficiently critical ‘problem solving’ or ‘administrative’ research.**
- **Ensuing ‘regime change’ wars in countries and regions including, but not limited to, Afghanistan, Iraq, North Africa and Syria, as well as geopolitical developments with respect to Russia and Ukraine and now Israel-Palestine, require critical examination through the SDE and SCAD lenses and, alongside this, identification of strategic deceptions and propaganda.**
- **At the domestic level, the 9/11 event led to a sharp reduction in civil liberties across liberal democracies and further concentration of political power. Sustained critical research is necessary into the rise of surveillance society, suppression of public dissent (and freedom of expression), co-optation of corporate media, corruption of legal structures, and the use of ‘lower-level’ false flags across democracies.**

- **Systematic and conceptually grounded comparative research into other SDEs and SCADs, such as the JFK assassination and the COVID-19 event, is now essential in order to accurately describe, understand and explain the extent to which democratic politics has been overturned by political and economic elites pursuing a politics of fear.**
- **Attention needs to be given to developing structures and mechanisms that can avert SDEs and SCADS whilst strengthening the ability of citizens and social movements to counter concentrated elite power.**

## Introduction

Twenty-three years have passed since the events of 9/11, during which the world has experienced historic levels of conflict and political transformation. The immediate ‘result’ of the 9/11 event was the initiation of the purported global ‘war on terror’. Policies included sweeping changes to domestic civil liberties, the initiation of ‘regime change’ wars in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, associated conflicts in Yemen and Pakistan, and also violence across North Africa. In 2020, claims of a global public health emergency in the form of a purportedly novel pathogen, COVID-19, led to unprecedented measures including lockdowns and experimental gene-therapy ‘vaccinations’ which were, in many instances, forced on people. Since COVID-19, components of a fledgling global authoritarian biosecurity regime continue to be pushed through the *Pandemic Preparedness Agenda* and a *Censorship Industrial Complex*. In reaction to both 9/11 and COVID-19, dissident communities emerged in order to challenge authorities whilst corporate/legacy news media and mainstream academia have either fallen silent or otherwise manufactured consent for official claims and narratives.

This is undoubtedly a rich environment, albeit a challenging and complex one, for researchers who are open-minded and courageous enough to examine these issues with sufficiently critical eyes. Those able to move beyond the instinct to self-censor often run the gamut of academic ostracization and smearing by corporate/legacy media. At the same time, researching events such as 9/11 and COVID-19 requires the willingness to engage in multidisciplinary research; subject areas ranging from engineering, physics, and the medical sciences, through to political science, psychology and beyond, are all relevant to understanding these complex phenomena.

Having acknowledged the multitude of challenges and complexities, what follows is an attempt to define a research agenda since organization and reflection are required in order

to be effective. The aim is to deepen our understanding of 9/11, its consequences for politics and society at both domestic and global levels, and to develop a broader understanding of the ways in which power is exercised in the contemporary world. It is developed from the research agenda recently published by *The International Center for 9/11 Justice* (IC911) (2024a) and which is available [here](#). This paper is not intended to be an exhaustive review that identifies and assesses all of the voluminous research in existence. Instead, the aim is to identify key areas of established knowledge and to suggest future directions for research, writing, and debate. It has been developed in consultation with members of IC911; feedback, as well as any suggestions, are welcome. This paper is intended as a living document and will be regularly updated in light of feedback and as significant research developments emerge.<sup>1</sup>

## Understanding the 9/11 Event: *The state of knowledge so far*

Over the years a large body of research has been established via an array of scientific and scholarly organisations, including Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth (AE9/11), the *Journal of 9/11 Studies*, the International Center for 9/11 Justice (IC911) (formerly the International Center for 9/11 Studies), the 9/11 Consensus Panel (Griffin and Woodworth, 2018) and Scholars for 9/11 Truth and Justice. Impactful or otherwise important research monographs include works by Ahmed (2005), Davidsson (2013), Griffin (2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b), MacQueen (2013 & 2023), McGinnis, (2021), Ryan (2013), Scott (2008), Thompson (2004), Walter (2015) and Zwicker (2006), whilst a plethora of independent researchers have provided invaluable contributions.

Although continuing consolidation and refinement of our understanding of the 9/11 event remains important, the existing body of research demonstrates through various avenues the fundamental inaccuracy of the official narrative which describes a terrorist attack *against* the US, conducted by a *hostile* non-state terrorist group called al-Qaeda, and motivated by religious zeal and political grievances. This narrative claims that al-Qaeda operatives hijacked four civilian airliners and flew three of them into targets in New York (the World Trade Center *Twin Towers* [WTC 1 and 2]) and Arlington, Virginia (the Pentagon), leading to the rapid collapse and total destruction of the Twin Towers within approximately an hour of being hit. Later in the day, a further building in the WTC complex, World Trade Center

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Building 7 (WTC 7), also collapsed, initially at free-fall acceleration, and was completely destroyed purportedly because of fires triggered by the earlier events.

The official narrative largely rests upon the 9/11 Commission Report (2004) and two investigations conducted by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) who were tasked with explaining the destruction of WTC 1, 2 and 7 (NIST 2005, 2008). The total destruction of all three steel-framed buildings was considered unprecedented and unpredictable because steel-framed structures can readily tolerate extended fires.

**All three reports are, however, demonstrably flawed.** The 9/11 Commission itself was not independent of the US government because its executive director, Philip Zelikow, served on President George W. Bush's transition team and his Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB). Zelikow was also co-author of the remarkably prescient 1998 *Foreign Affairs*<sup>2</sup> paper which described nightmarish scenarios involving release of a 'deadly pathogen', weapons of mass destruction including nuclear and chemical, and their use as part of a 'catastrophic' act of terrorism that would create a 'watershed event in American History' (Carter, Deutch and Zelikow, 1998: 81). The resulting 9/11 Commission Report was shown by Griffin (2004) to contain substantive 'omissions and distortions' whilst, to this day, many of the questions raised by relatives of 9/11 victims remain unanswered (McGinnis, 2021).

Remarkably, because their analysis of WTC 1 and 2 limited itself to explaining the structural failure of the buildings up to the point of 'collapse initiation', and did not extend to explaining the ensuing total collapse, NIST failed to provide a full explanation of how the Twin Towers came to be destroyed. According to NIST's (2008) WTC 7 investigation, its collapse was caused by an *unpredictable* and hitherto *unprecedented* process involving 'thermal expansion' (as opposed to thermal weakening) of steel members whilst, in another remarkable omission, no attempt was made to test whether explosives had been used. Key early work by researchers David Chandler, Tony Szamboti and David Cole (Pepper, 2013) identified falsified information in the NIST WTC 7 report with regards to its computer simulation of the collapse, and which involved omission of key structural components (stiffeners, braces, and shear studs). The inability of the alleged 'thermal expansion' process to cause the initiating failure that supposedly triggered a total progressive collapse was also documented in this paper.

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<sup>2</sup> The *Foreign Affairs* paper is described in a footnote as a 'distillation of the complete report of the University's Study Group on Catastrophic Terrorism, published by Stanford University Press'.

***Scientific understanding of the destruction of WTC 1, 2 and 7***

In light of the shortcomings in the official NIST investigations, a considerable amount of research has been devoted over the years to developing a fuller and more accurate account of what actually happened to these buildings. Much of this work draws upon expertise in the physical sciences and includes analysis of WTC dust samples which identified evidence of the active thermitic material that was likely used to destroy the building structures (Harrit et al, 2009). This research remains unrefuted in the scientific literature. Building upon the aforementioned early work by David Chandler, Tony Szamboti and David Cole (Pepper, 2013), a four-year AE9/11-funded study into WTC 7 was carried out at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (Hulsey, Quan and Xiao, 2020). This study demonstrated that the symmetrical and initially free-fall collapse of WTC 7 could only have occurred if all of its 82 supporting columns were removed nearly simultaneously, thus adding considerable support to the hypothesis that the building was destroyed through controlled demolition. A recent paper details the instantaneous and symmetrical initiation of free fall along with the attempts by NIST to obscure this smoking gun evidence (Chandler, Walter and Szamboti, 2023).

Regarding WTC 1 and 2, an important area of research concerns the plausibility of the original collapse mechanism theorized to explain their complete destruction. Advanced primarily by Professor Zdeněk Bažant (2002, 2007, 2008, 2011), first in a rapidly conceived and written paper submitted to the *Journal of Engineering Mechanics* of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2001, this ‘crush-down crush-up’ theory hypothesized that the top section of each tower, above the point of aircraft impact, crushed the building structures below in totality via a pile-driver effect, and then crushed itself up upon reaching the ground. A 2013 paper by Szuladziński, Szamboti and Johns demonstrated, however, that the collapse of WTC 1 would actually have been rapidly arrested by the intact building structure below. MacQueen and Szamboti (2009) document, with respect to WTC 1, the absence of a jolt, or deceleration, which would necessarily have occurred if the top section of the building had collapsed onto the structurally intact lower section. The ‘missing jolt’ confirms that the lower section structure would have to have been deliberately destroyed ahead of the falling top section, so as to remove all resistance to it and thereby eliminate any jolt. Complementing that finding, a recent paper published in the *Journal of 9/11 Studies* demonstrates the incompatibility between the crush-down crush-up hypothesis and the observation that large sections of the inner core of each tower actually remained standing for up to 15 seconds after the rest of the structure fell to the ground (Cole,

2023). Furthermore, visual analysis combined with linguistic analysis of eyewitness testimony published in 2024 identifies multiple flashes of light consistent with the detonation of explosives as WTC 2 was destroyed (Korsgaard, 2024). In 2006, MacQueen documented a total of 118 eyewitness testimonies, from firefighters, to explosions in the Twin Towers.

Taken together, the quantity of research now completed demonstrates the implausibility of official claims that it was the damage caused by the impact of two airliners that led to the destruction of WTC 1 and 2 as well as that of the third building, WTC 7, that was not hit by either aircraft (Griffin and Woodworth, 2018). As of 2024, the *Journal of 9/11 Studies* has published over forty articles covering key aspects of the building destructions in New York. **The most likely remaining explanation involves pre-planned and deliberate destruction of the three buildings in New York on 11 September 2001** (Jones, Korol, Szamboti and Walter, 2016).

***Investigation of the alleged hijackers and the piloting of the four flights (American Airlines Flights 11 and 77; United Airlines Flights 175 and 93)***

A second important area of research involves the alleged hijacking and subsequent piloting of the four airliners. Regarding the alleged hijackers, the 9/11 Consensus Panel established multiple inconsistencies in the official narrative. First, regarding the movements of Mohamed Atta, the alleged hijacker of American Airlines Flight 11 (AA11) described by the 9/11 Commission as the ‘tactical leader of the 9/11 plot’, early media reports based on official sources claimed he left a rental car at Boston Logan airport containing incriminating al-Qaeda material and his will. Meanwhile, two other alleged al-Qaeda operatives, Adnan Bukhari and Ameer Bukhari, inexplicably travelled away from Boston to Portland on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, only to then catch a connecting flight back to Boston in order to board AA11 on the morning of 9/11. This story had to be corrected when it emerged Adnan was alive and Ameer had died in 2000. The new story was that it was Atta, not the Bukharis, who inexplicably drove away from Boston to Portland on September 10<sup>th</sup>. The incriminating material that had been found, including Atta’s will, was then supposed to have been found in his baggage which had accidentally not been transferred from the connecting flight onto AA11 at Boston (Griffin and Woodward, 2018: pp. 162-165). Why the bags failed to be loaded, why Atta would place his will in the aircraft he planned to crash, and why he made a risky trip to Portland requiring a connecting flight back to Boston the morning of September 11, were all left unexplained in the modified official narrative. Griffin and Woodworth (2018: p.

165) conclude that these ‘questions came about as by-products in the course of creating, over the course of several days, a revised version of the original story ...’ and suggests that ‘what became the official story was most likely based on creative imagination not fact’.

Second, the high-level intelligence operation *Able Danger*, according to at least three of its leadership team — Colonel Anthony Shaffer, Captain Scott Phillpott and James D. Smith — had established that Atta was in the US in January 2000. This contradicted official claims that Atta’s presence in the US was known about only in June 2000. Remarkably, at the time, requests to inform the FBI, so that they could ‘take down the cell’ of which Atta was a part, were rejected by the DoD’s Special Operations Command (Griffin and Woodward, 2018: p. 185). This critical information was dismissed by the 9/11 Commission as having no ‘historical significance’, whilst the witness testimony from US officials was downplayed as ‘unreliable’ (Griffin and Woodward, 2018: p. 194). These facts indicate, at best, an intelligence failure coverup and, at worst, that Atta was ‘protected by elements within the Pentagon and allowed to act and travel freely until 9/11’ (Griffin and Woodward, 2018: p. 194).

Third, evidence contradicts official claims the alleged hijackers were devout and fanatical Muslims motivated to conduct a mass casualty suicide mission. Multiple media reports, drawing on eyewitness testimony, claimed that Atta and other hijackers used prostitutes and took illegal drugs. This evidence was ignored by the 9/11 Commission (Griffin and Woodworth, 2018: pp: 176-183). Eyewitness reports describing Atta’s personality and physical appearance when in Germany, which emphasized his devout, humble, shy and polite nature, are contradicted by witness accounts describing an ‘arrogant, aggressive, and rude’ individual who consumed cocaine and alcohol, and also frequented a strip club. This evidence was also ignored by the 9/11 Commission (Griffin and Woodworth, 2018: p. 178). **Continued research into the history, behavior and activities of the alleged hijackers is clearly warranted.**

Other significant anomalies identified by the 9/11 Consensus Panel include the feasibility of phone calls reportedly made by passengers and flight attendants on the aircraft, and the failure of all four aircraft crews to squawk the hijack transponder code 7500 (Davidsson, 2013; Griffin and Woodworth, 2018: pp. 195-221; Morgan, 2010). Regarding the phone calls, these became an important source of information about what had apparently happened on the flights and, as such, served as central components of the official narrative. For example, the phone call supposedly made by Todd Beamer on UA93, which reportedly crashed in Pennsylvania after passengers supposedly attempted to take back control, gave

birth to the ‘Let’s roll’ phrase; the call from TV commentator Barbara Olson to her husband, US Solicitor General Theodore “Ted” Olson, described the takeover of the aircraft and the use of box cutters by the hijackers. Without these calls being made public, the alleged events on board the aircraft would have remained obscure, even invisible, to the public mind.

**Multiple anomalies, however, bring into question the authenticity of the calls** (Griffin and Woodworth, 2018: pp. 195-221). For example, initial claims in the media that the calls were made by cell phones were questioned when it became apparent that, when at altitude, cell phone connections would have been highly unlikely. The narrative later presented, implicitly in the 9/11 Commission Report and explicitly by the Department of Justice during the 2006 trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, indicated airphones installed on the planes were used for all but two of the calls. However, there remained some calls that still could only be attributed to technically impossible cell phones made at altitude. This was because American Airlines was found to have disabled the airphone systems on its Boeing 757s prior to September 2001 and also because, for example, Deena Burnett consistently reported having seen the cell phone number of her husband, Thomas Burnett, on her caller ID, when the calls he purportedly placed would have been made from altitudes of 35,000 feet and 40,700 feet (Griffin, 2012a: pp. 103-109; pp. 126-127).

Meanwhile, the call by Todd Beamer noted above, which was handled by GTE Airfone employee Lisa Jefferson, reportedly lasted approximately 45 minutes past the alleged crash time. Similarly, a call by Jeremy Glick to the residence of his parents-in-law lasted approximately 100 minutes beyond the alleged crash time (Griffin, 2012a: pp. 120-121; Griffin and Woodworth, 2018: pp. 201-204). Not only do both calls not align with the official crash time, they also fail to align with the official time of the alleged hijacking: the hijacking ostensibly began at 9:28 AM while the calls from Beamer and Glick reported the hijackers invading the cockpit as late as 9:52 AM (Davidsson, 2013: pp. 185-201, pp. 227-231). Based upon the evidence presented by the US Department of Justice during the Moussaoui trial, Morgan (2010: p. 27) indicates that Barbara Olson’s call did not connect. Later analysis of AT&T Claircom records of calls reportedly made from American Airlines Flight 77 (AA77), specifically those calls for which the callers were not identified, posits that calls supposedly made by Olson were routed through AA77’s partially disabled airphone system (Woodworth, 2011; Wagner, 2012).

Finally, considerable attention has been paid to the plausibility of the alleged hijackers being able to take control of the aircraft and then pilot them into their targets in New York and Arlington (Griffin and Woodworth: 2018; pp. 81-90). Although apparently

having obtained commercial pilot licenses on light aircraft (9/11 Commission Report), there is no evidence the hijackers received the training necessary to effectively fly and navigate a large jet airliner whilst several reports indicate the alleged hijackers were incompetent. In light of this, a question of ongoing investigation is whether the aircraft were being controlled, either internally or externally, by a computerized navigation system programmed to the intended targets (Monaghan, 2008). Most prominently, the flight maneuver performed by the aircraft that allegedly hit the Pentagon involved an extremely challenging descending 330-degree turn finishing in close proximity to major obstacles, such as a communication tower, while accelerating along a dive path, and leveling out close to the ground in the last seconds before impacting the building at ground floor level at ~448 kts. Aside from the difficulty of this flight path, there also continues to be divisive debate over what did in fact impact the Pentagon. Early claims that the opening in the wall of the Pentagon was too small for a Boeing 757 fueled debate about whether a large aircraft had actually hit it. In particular, Meyssan's *Pentagate* (2002: plates VI and VII) stated that 'the orifice by which the "Boeing" entered measures about 15-16 feet' (far too small for an aircraft with a 114-foot wingspan), whilst presenting images of the aftermath in which the full extent of the damage is obscured by water spray from fire trucks. Coming to a clear understanding of the nature of the Pentagon events is an active area IC911's *Debated Topics Forum* which aims to resolve longstanding disputes. Regarding the aircraft that impacted the WTC towers, both were precisely maneuvered at speeds, ranging between 430 and 530 kts, that were well above their maximum operating speeds of just over 300kts at low altitude (NTSB 2000a&b). To date, the *Journal of 9/11 Studies* has published nine articles related to the hijacking and control of the aircraft.

In sum, fundamental flaws and anomalies undermine the official story about how 19 young religious fanatics commandeered four commercial airliners and, in three instances, used them to carry out suicide attacks in New York and Arlington. **It is essential, therefore, to investigate further the supposed training and competencies of the alleged hijackers, the complexity of the flight maneuvers and their feasibility for the alleged hijackers, and the possible role of remote guidance technology.** Furthermore, anomalies surrounding the phone calls, when combined with the implausibility of the alleged hijackers piloting the aircraft, beg further questions. If the phone calls were inauthentic, in that they did not emanate from passengers and flight attendants reporting real events on board the aircraft that crashed, a number of possibilities emerge ranging from fabrication of the calls via use of voice morphing or other technological means coupled with manipulated phone call records,

through to the calls having been made by the named passengers and flight attendants but not from the aircraft that crashed. It is now imperative that the array of aviation-related evidence provided by authorities — including the purported telephone calls, but also the other evidence, such as the Dulles video supposedly showing some of the hijackers, the NORAD tapes and radar tracks/flight dynamics, Flight Data Recorder files, ACARS data (Aircraft Condition and Reporting System), flight path studies from the National Transportation Safety Board, the testimonies and notes of air traffic controllers, documentation and testimony provided by the airlines and the Federal Aviation Administration and eyewitness testimony — all now be subjected to systematic and rigorous interrogation as to their authenticity.

**Beyond that, a concerted effort to develop a plausible and evidence-based account of what actually transpired with respect to the four airliners is a research priority.**

*Planning and organization including foreknowledge, the 2001 anthrax attacks, and actors external to the US*

Central questions regarding this third research area include identification of the individuals, groups, and government agencies, both US and foreign, involved with the planning, implementation, and subsequent cover-up, of the 9/11 operation.

The 9/11 Consensus Panel confirmed the existence of multiple anomalies regarding major military exercises held on and before 9/11, as well as contradictory claims regarding key military and political officials. In particular, it established that the 9/11 Commission provided false or dubious information about six high ranking officials. For example, regarding the remarkable fact that, after having been informed of ongoing terrorist attacks, President Bush was left unguarded in front of school children at a public location for at least seven minutes, the 9/11 Commission accepted this was because the Secret Service did not wish to alarm the children (Griffin and Woodworth, 2018: pp. 108-109). It is implausible that such a decision would have been made during an unfolding attack when the priority would be to get the president to safety. The action provides strong circumstantial evidence that the Secret Service knew the president's life was not in danger. The 9/11 Commission also claimed that US Vice President Dick Cheney arrived at the Presidential Emergency Operations Center twenty minutes after the Pentagon attack. In fact, Secretary of Transportation Norma Mineta recalled Cheney issuing what could only plausibly be understood as an order not to shoot down AA77 which was inbound to the Pentagon. Mineta's testimony, coupled with the falsification of Cheney's whereabouts during this

period, suggests a deliberate attempt to disguise Cheney's actions and role on 9/11 (Griffin and Woodworth, 2018: pp. 113-118).

Kevin Ryan's *Another Nineteen* (2013) sets out the evidence that implicates US officials, rather than the 19 young Muslim hijackers, with the events of 9/11. For example, Ryan's analysis describes Cheney, along with Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, as 'running the show on 9/11' and of being a top suspect. There are contradictory and unresolved claims about the whereabouts of Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Meyers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Hugh Shelton, as well as unanswered questions as to who was in charge of operations at the National Military Command Center (Griffin and Woodworth, 2018: pp. 119-141). Both Ryan (2013) and Griffin and Woodworth (2018) discuss the role of New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani in relation to events in New York. On the day Giuliani reported he knew the buildings were going to collapse (Griffin and Woodworth, 2018: p. 153) even though, as noted earlier, the collapse of steel-framed buildings due to fire is considered unprecedented and unpredictable. Giuliani also oversaw the removal of crime scene evidence including most of the steel which was quickly shipped to China where it was then melted down (Ryan, 2018). Ryan (2013) identifies a further sixteen government officials and private sector workers who should be considered prime suspects regarding the events of 9/11.

### *Foreknowledge*

A notable issue area relates to foreknowledge. This evidence is important in terms of refuting the officially sanctioned idea that 9/11 involved surprise attacks organised by a non-state terrorist group. There is compelling evidence of insider trading preceding 9/11, whereby put options were placed on United Airlines and American Airlines stocks (put options are essentially bets on stock prices going down). Furthermore, the stocks of financial and reinsurance companies, as well as other financial vehicles, were also identified as being associated with suspicious trades, whilst large credit card transactions were completed just before the attacks. The US Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) named a number of people and companies that were suspected of being involved in 9/11 insider (informed) trades. Additionally, several studies by economists have substantiated the claim of financial activity consistent with foreknowledge of 9/11 (Potesham, 2006; Chesney, Cramer, and Mancini, 2014; Wong, Thompson, and Teh, 2011). Absurdly, the 9/11 Commission Report dismissed the significance of all this evidence, in one case asserting that 95 percent of the

United Airlines September 6 trades came from ‘a single US-based institutional investor with no conceivable ties to al-Qaeda’ (9/11 Commission Report: p. 499; Note 130). No further investigation was deemed necessary by the 9/11 Commission. **Continued research into 9/11-related financial crimes, starting with the people and companies cited by the SEC, is recommended.**

Training exercises provide further circumstantial evidence of foreknowledge. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Ralph Eberhart was Commander in Chief of the North American Aerospace Defense (NORAD), as well as commander of the US Space Command. In these roles, Eberhart was responsible for setting levels for the Infocon alert system that defends against attacks on communications networks within the Department of Defense. Just 12 hours before the 9/11 attacks, Eberhart oversaw the setting of Infocon to its least protective level which made the DOD computer networks, including the air defense system, susceptible to compromise including hacking. Eberhart was the sponsor of several, highly coincidental, military exercises (i.e., war games) held on the morning of 9/11. These military exercises, which included Vigilant Guardian, confused and disrupted the military’s ability to respond to the reported hijackings (Ryan, 2013).

Apart from the many military exercises coinciding with the attacks, a significant number of the facilities and organizations impacted by the 9/11 attacks were engaging in training exercises on September 11<sup>th</sup> that were later said to be merely coincidental. These included training exercises on the morning of 9/11 at the White House Situation Room, the New York City Emergency Operations Center, the World Trade Center computer network, Army bases near the Pentagon and New York City, the Washington DC police and fire departments, the National Reconnaissance Office, and the Joint Special Operations Command (History Commons). **Further investigation into military and training exercises related to 9/11 is a research priority.**

### *The 2001 anthrax attacks*

These attacks, running in parallel with 9/11, involved the posting of anthrax-laced letters to members of Congress and resulted in a number of deaths. They were initially presented as being connected to al-Qaeda, but later, when the official narrative became inconsistent and problematic, the attacks were blamed on a rogue US scientist from a US military laboratory. As MacQueen documents in *The 2001 Anthrax Deception* (2012), these attacks were likely committed by actors linked to, or identical with, the US officials

suspected to have been involved in the 9/11 crimes. With respect to the broader official narrative surrounding 9/11, the 2001 anthrax event is highly significant because of its role in constructing fear of bioweapons and their use by terrorists. As noted earlier, the 1998 *Foreign Affairs* paper co-authored by 9/11 Commission Executive Director Philip Zelikow predicted the use of ‘deadly pathogen(s)’ as part of the purported emerging threat of ‘catastrophic’ terrorism. The combined biological, chemical and nuclear threat supposedly posed by terrorists subsequently became a central component of George W. Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ agenda which identified several countries — North Korea, Iraq and Iran — as posing a threat because of their weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The 2003 invasion of Iraq was primarily justified in terms of its alleged possession and active production of chemical and biological weapons (Herring and Robinson, 2014a & 2014b). As discussed below, the ‘axis of evil’ countries had already been earmarked for ‘regime change’ prior to 9/11. **Additional research into politically exploited acts of bioterrorism, or threats thereof, is encouraged.**

### *External actors*

Beyond activity in the US, research on the involvement of other state and non-state actors includes the likely roles of Saudi, UAE, Kuwaiti, British, and Israeli officials, corporations, and persons. In the case of Saudi Arabia, an ongoing lawsuit on behalf of 9/11 victims’ families seeks redress with respect to the alleged involvement of Saudi officials with the support and funding of al-Qaeda and the individuals alleged to have been involved in the hijacking of the airliners (Ashton v KSA, 2017). In 2023 information emerged confirming that two of the alleged hijackers had been recruited into a joint CIA-Saudi intelligence operation (Klarenberg, 2023) whilst, during the last decade, the late US Senator Bob Graham and former CIA officer Robert Baer have both promoted the idea of official Saudi culpability.<sup>3</sup> Although much of the surrounding narrative implies the existence of a genuine terrorist plot involving the hijacking of aircraft by Islamic fundamentalists, this legal process is significant because of the light it sheds on the connections between Saudi officials and the individuals who were evidently put in a position to be blamed for carrying out the attacks. The lawsuit by relatives of 9/11 victims continues to generate significant evidence such as the recently released filing summarizing what had been learned about the complicity of two

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.c-span.org/video/?414563-1/senator-bob-graham-addresses-release-911-reports-28-pages> and <https://hammer.ucla.edu/programs-events/2015/09/911-the-saudi-connection-with-senator-bob-graham-and-robert-baer/>.

Saudi officials in arranging reception, transportation and housing for two of the alleged hijackers (Benjamin and Simon, 2024). Other researchers have evaluated the possible involvement of the Israeli government and its intelligence services.

*Summation: the challenge of studying planning and organisation*

It is very unlikely that detailed documentary evidence of the planning and organisation of a deep state black operation will ever surface. What can be established over time, however, is an increasingly detailed picture of the actions and conduct of key individuals that can then be used to construct and evaluate hypotheses. As well as political officials from the Bush administration and wider US government bureaucracy, those involved with the management of the WTC complex, and officials from the aviation industry and air traffic control, need closer scrutiny in order to identify inconsistencies and suspicious or inexplicable behaviour. Ryan's *Another Nineteen* provides one template for how to conduct such work. **Finally, given the likely involvement of foreign state actors, including those from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Britain and Israel, and also other allies of the US, research and analysis needs to be extended well beyond the US context.**

*Explaining 9/11 through politics and geopolitics*

Given the untenability of the official story about a radical terrorist group being behind 9/11, a fourth key issue area concerns the development of political explanations more plausible than notions regarding religious zeal and anti-US grievances.

Amongst critical scholars, in fact, there is little dispute the 9/11 event was *exploited* by elements within the US political establishment and wider military-industrial complex in order to enable 'regime-change' wars under the guise of a so-called global 'war on terror' (Chomsky, 2001). Specific plans to attack Afghanistan in order to overthrow its Taliban leadership *predated* 9/11 (Griffin, 2017: pp. 32-33; Guardian, 2004), as did the policy of regime-change in Iraq (Iraq Liberation Act, 1998). Two retired high-ranking officials — General Wesley Clark (Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO [1997-2000]) and Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson (Former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell) — have stated unequivocally that plans to attack multiple countries were in place in 2001 (Clark 2007a, 2007b; Wilkerson 2019) with Wilkerson making clear the plans *predated* 9/11. Clark identified the targeted countries as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Iran and

reportedly was informed of this shortly after 9/11. The UK-based Chilcot Inquiry, which examined UK involvement with the 2003 invasion of Iraq, reported a British diplomatic cable, dated 15 September 2001, as saying ‘(t)he “regime-change hawks” in Washington are arguing that a coalition put together for one purpose [against international terrorism] could be used to clear up other problems in the region’ (Chilcot 2016, 3.1: para. 65; p. 324). Also released via the Chilcot Inquiry, a December 2001 memo from UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to George Bush, titled ‘The War Against Terrorism: The Second Phase’, discussed a total of seven countries (Iraq, Philippines, Syria, Iran, Yemen, Somalia and Indonesia) and provides further indications of how the ‘War on Terror’ was being conceived. The memo also stated: ‘If toppling Saddam is a prime objective, it is far easier to do it with Syria and Iran in favour or acquiescing rather than hitting all three at once’ (Blair, 2001). Many of these countries, in particular Iraq, Syria and Iran, could not have had any plausible relationship to a Sunni-based, fundamentalist terror organisation, which is what al-Qaeda was presented as. Syria and Iraq had secular political structures whilst Iran is predominantly Shia. The idea that these countries presented either legitimate or logical targets for a ‘war on terror’ based upon the official 9/11 narrative of Sunni terrorism represents a deception on the part of US and British politicians (Robinson, 2016).

Undoubtedly exploited for the purposes of fighting a wide range of regime-change wars, critical 9/11 researchers argue the case that the event itself was *instigated* by those seeking these wars. 9/11 is described by MacQueen as a ‘manufactured war trigger’ (Walter, 2023) and by Ganser (2023) as an imperialist ‘false flag’. Both Scott (2008) and Griffin (2004, 2016) describe the role of the neoconservatives and the 1990s Project for a New American Century (PNAC) in formulating the regime-change war strategy. Of the 19 individuals identified in Ryan’s (2013) *Another Nineteen*, a number are connected to the neoconservative power block including Bush’s Vice President Dick Cheney.

Overall, whether subscribing to an *exploitation* or an *instigation* hypothesis, **there is little serious doubt amongst critical academics and researchers that a belligerent and expansionist neoconservative political block played a central role in constructing 9/11 as a terror event requiring a global ‘war on terror’ in response, and then deceptively exploited this in order to initiate a series of major wars in the international system.** The challenge moving forward is to encourage mainstream scholarship to recognize these facts and to also address the evidence, set out in the paper thus far, that the 9/11 event was indeed a false flag attack instigated for the purposes of initiating these wars. At the same time, research and writing should also explore the wider and deeper political and economic

dimensions of 9/11. Political dimensions, as we shall see shortly, include significant alterations to democratic societies and the centralization of power via the curtailment of civil liberties and the entrenchment of surveillance society, as well as associated explanations about the use of a *politics of fear* designed to gain control over populations (e.g., Altheide, 2006; Furedi, 2007; Thrall and Cramer, 2009). These matters will be returned to shortly. Regarding economic dimensions, geopolitical motivations interweave with the imperatives of the military-industrial complex and the massive industry underlying it. The interests and profit orientation of these actors are likely to be either contributory, enabling or underlying factors that help to explain 9/11.

### **Broadening the Agenda: *Studying the geopolitical and domestic results of 9/11 and other deep events through the ‘structural deep event’ lens***

Continued study of the 9/11 event itself is essential and should remain focused on establishing an authoritative and comprehensive account. But it is also an event with profound consequences at both domestic and international levels. 9/11 changed the course of history. **Professor Peter Dale Scott identifies 9/11 as belonging to a class of phenomena he calls the ‘structural deep event’ (SDE) and his analytical framework is well-suited to the task of understanding and analysing both 9/11 and its broader consequences.** SDEs involve the instigation or exploitation of a real-world event by powerful actors, ones that are both internal and external to a state’s formal governance structures, in order to advance political-economic agendas with structural implications for society. Such actors occupy a space within existing power structures that is often referred to as the ‘deep state’ (Good, 2022: pp. 143-166). Scott describes SDEs as:

mysterious events, like the JFK assassination, the Watergate break-in, or 9/11, which violate the American social structure, have a major impact on American society, repeatedly involve lawbreaking or violence, and in many cases proceed from an unknown dark force (Scott, 2015).

Lance deHaven-Smith’s ‘state crimes against democracy’ (SCAD) concept is frequently used alongside the SDE concept (deHaven-Smith, 2006; 2014). SCADs include a wide range of political malfeasance, stretching from ‘election tampering’ through to illegal ‘secret wars’

and include actions by ‘public officials to subvert popular control of government’ (deHaven-Smith and Witt, 2009: p. 548). A more detailed discussion of the SDE and SCAD concepts can be found in Robinson and Ryan (forthcoming, 2024). For the purposes of this paper, I simply take from the SDE and SCAD concepts the idea that the ‘deep state’ does carry out illegal or nefarious plots aimed at creating wide-ranging and long-term changes to society, and which involve propaganda and deception (Bakir et al, 2019; Robinson et al, 2018).

With respect to academia, a central challenge preventing fulsome engagement with concepts such as Scott’s structural deep event lies with the propensity of academics to adopt strategies involving ‘safe’ research that avoids critical engagement with existing power structures. Cox (1981) describes the distinction between ‘problem solving’ and critical theory with the former being concerned with primarily addressing questions as defined by existing authority structures (see also Rideout and Mosco, 1997, on instrumental and structural approaches as well as Lazarsfeld’s (1941) classic division between ‘administrative’ and ‘critical’ research). The desire for funding and career advancement undoubtedly has a powerful disciplining effect on academic researchers (Herring and Robinson, 2003) whilst propaganda drives themselves shape how academic researchers perceive the world. As noted at the start, those who do engage in genuinely critical research can find themselves subjected to character assassination, or smear, campaigns (Hayward and Robinson, 2024). Given the profound inconsistency between the official 9/11 narrative and what actually happened that day, scholars content to slip into the mode of ‘problem solving’ or ‘administrative’ research regarding the global ‘war on terror’ and subsequent geopolitical shifts are, to all intents and purposes, wasting time and resources. As will be noted shortly, even purportedly critical scholarship has evaded engagement with what happened on 9/11. The logical path to follow is that of a genuinely critical research agenda which produces analysis that accords with reality, as opposed to a propaganda narrative. Recognition of this uncomfortable truth might embolden more academics to join those cited in this article.

With this call to action in mind, three possible research strands flow from the work to date demonstrating that 9/11 can accurately be characterized as an SDE or SCAD: 1) critical re-evaluation of the global ‘war on terror’ and associated conflicts, 2) analysis of the domestic-level consequences of the 9/11 crime, and 3) exploration of other SDEs and SCADs.

### ***1) Revisiting the global ‘war on terror’ and subsequent geopolitical developments***

It is difficult to overestimate the scale of error afflicting academic work on the global ‘war on terror’, as well as international relations more generally, based as it is upon on assuming the veracity of the official 9/11 narrative. Terrorism studies became a growing discipline after 9/11, and significant funding resources enabled its establishment as a major sub-discipline within the social sciences (Smyth et al, 2008). **And yet even the self-described critical literature on the subject — critical terrorism studies — has failed to properly assess the validity of its underlying assumptions about what happened on 9/11.** By and large, the extent of acceptable critical analysis has remained limited with boundaries firmly set at arguing the attacks were a consequence of ‘blow back’, whereby victims of immoral and violent US foreign policies abroad decided to take revenge. Any arguments more critical than this, such as that 9/11 was a manufactured war trigger or false flag, have remained outside the boundaries of legitimate academic debate (Hughes, 2020). This boundary was established by critical scholar Noam Chomsky in his book *9/11* published on the 1st December 2001. Since then he has been a prominent ‘critical’ voice deriding those who question the official 9/11 narrative (Griffin, 2010; MacQueen, 2017; Ryan, 2013). Predictably, major early scholarly contributions by Professor David Ray Griffin (e.g., 2004; 2012) and others (Griffin and Scott, 2007) were marginalized by mainstream academics. Because the entire discipline of terrorism studies, including both its critical and mainstream variants, assumes the official version of what happened on 9/11 is correct, when in fact it is demonstrably untrue, nothing less than a Kuhnian paradigm shift is necessary for this sub-discipline. One important part of the soul searching necessary for academics should involve reflection on the wisdom of their having accepted, without proper evaluation or interrogation, a government explanation of a major criminal act. It is well known that governments sometimes lie and it is also a well-established principle across liberal democracies that criminal acts require objective and impartial investigation. That these basics have seemingly been forgotten by vast swathes of the academy is extraordinary.

**Because 9/11 served primarily as an SDE designed to initiate a series of major wars, it is important that researchers explore the wars that followed it with a particular focus on developing a critical understanding of them primarily as consequences of a manufactured war trigger and, in line with the SDE/SCAD concepts, examining the roles of propaganda and deception in each case. Similarly, IC911 advocates research**

**into the history of terrorism narratives, particularly in the decades leading up to 9/11.**

Some of the more notable conflicts and potential areas for critical research are as follows.

### *Afghanistan*

The first war flowing from 9/11 was the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, and, as noted earlier, it is known that specific plans to attack its Taliban leadership predated 9/11 (Griffin, 2017: pp. 32-33; Guardian, 2004). This war led to 20 years of military engagement, ending with a chaotic US withdrawal in 2021. There are numerous areas for potential research from the SDE perspective. These include, for example, the way in which NATO Article 5 was invoked via dubious or non-existent intelligence through the 'Frank Taylor report' presented by the US to its NATO allies in October 2001 (Harrit, 2018). The document provided legal foundation for the NATO operation in Afghanistan and enabled the involvement of US allies such as the United Kingdom and Germany. Another critical moment during the establishing phase of this war involved the side-lining and then assassination of Abdul Haq. Independent researcher Lucy Morgan Edwards argues that Haq was well placed to serve as a potential future leader of Afghanistan, and one who might have successfully unified the country and prevented external intervention (Edwards, 2012; 2014). Once the war was underway, highly deceptive propaganda campaigns appear to have been initiated involving, for example, the misleading presentation of the US-led operations as serving democracy and the rights of Afghan women.

### *Iraq*

As with Afghanistan, and again as noted earlier, a regime-change policy for Iraq was in place prior to 9/11 (Iraq Liberation Act, 1998) although the invasion itself has become best known for the manipulation of intelligence in order to give a misleading impression that Iraq possessed a current and credible WMD (weapons of mass destruction) programme and one that could be potentially used by terrorists (Herring and Robinson, 2014a&b; Mearsheimer, 2010). This propaganda campaign was primarily designed to mobilize public support for the war and, in addition, a false connection was made by the Bush administration between Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and the alleged perpetrators of 9/11 (Milbank and Deane, 2003).

Less well-researched issues across mainstream academia concern propaganda and deception during the post-invasion occupation period (2003-2011 for US forces and 2003-

2009 for British forces). One example here relates to the role of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the founder of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Independent journalist William Wagenen (2024) argues that, although presented as a terrorist threat to the Iraqi people and the West, al-Zarqawi was likely a US intelligence asset playing a role in creating a ‘strategy of tension’ (manufacturing threats and fear in order to control populations) in Iraq. Some evidence the US was involved in propaganda designed to manipulate Iraqi perceptions of AQI emerged in 2016 with reports that the PR agency Bell Pottinger had been producing fake or misleading news stories and disseminating fake al-Qaeda propaganda films, purportedly for the purpose of tracking terror suspects (Black and Fielding-Smith, 2016; see also Hernandez, 2024; Kinross, 2020). The possibility raised here is that Iraqi perceptions of an al-Qaeda threat in Iraq were manipulated in order to both fuel divisions during the nascent civil war/insurgency and increase support for the US-led provisional government structures.

### *North Africa*

Another area needing further exploration concerns a similar process of manufacturing terror threats that seems to have occurred across North Africa and the Sahal region. Anthropologist Professor Jeremy Keenan (2009, 2013) has documented the occurrence of ‘false flag’ terror events in this region during the 2000s and which, according to his analysis, involved the creation of a largely non-existent al-Qaeda threat. This, in turn, would have enabled the expansion of US involvement in Africa including the creation of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2007.

### *Syria*

As the global ‘war on terror’ and related conflicts segued into the 2010s, the nature and approach adopted by the US and its allies appears to have involved a shift towards less overt war fighting through greater reliance upon proxies. It is possible that this was due, at least in part, to increasing public opposition to the high-profile operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and the deaths of American service personnel (Baum and Groeling, 2010). The most prominent of these proxy wars is the ongoing effort to overthrow the Syrian government and which initially involved the largest ever covert CIA operation, Operation Timber Sycamore, implemented with the co-operation of Saudi Arabia. More generally, the Syria ‘regime change war’ involves the arming of extremists in partnership with Saudi Arabia and an

alliance of countries — US, UK, France, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Israel — seeking to overthrow the Syrian government (Abrams, 2021; Blumenthal, 2019; Berger, 2016; Mazzetti, Goldman and Schmidt 2017; Porter 2017). As noted earlier, Syria, along with Iran and Iraq, were mentioned in the communications between Bush and Blair immediately after the 9/11 event regarding when to ‘hit’ them (Blair, 2001).

One component of the propaganda surrounding Syria involves the promotion of a narrative implicating the Syrian government with alleged chemical weapons attacks. As with the WMD narrative regarding Iraq, this narrative, focused as it is on prohibited chemical weapons, is reminiscent of 1998 *Foreign Affairs* article co-authored by Zelikow (Carter, Deutch and Zelikow, 1998: p. 81). This article, as discussed earlier, had made predictions about the use of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their use as part of ‘catastrophic’ terror events. Similar to the Iraqi WMD issue, these claims appear to be false. For example, one alleged chemical weapons event, in the Damascus suburb of Douma in 2018, became prominent because of the emergence of two whistleblowers from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Two of the scientists investigating this attack, which the US government had predictably blamed on the Syrian government, reported on the manipulation and falsification of evidence during the investigation (Daly and Wallace, 2024; Maté, 2023 a&b; Robinson, 2023 a&b; Berlin Group 21, 2023). Earlier incidents, including the notorious 2013 Ghouta attack, are also of dubious origin and, given what is now known about the Douma incident, need to be subjected to further detailed analysis in addition to that already conducted by a number of independent researchers (Wagenen, 2022; Kobs, Kabusk and Larson, 2021).

More generally, the scale of propaganda operations during the 2010s is seemingly vast. For example, leaked documents confirm the existence of a major ‘strategic communication’ operation funded by the UK government and implemented through a private company ARK (Access, Research, Knowledge) established by a former British diplomat and funded by the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Robinson, 2022; Thomason, 2024). ARK enables ‘stratcomm’ across multiple conflict zones including Syria, Yemen and Lebanon (Klarenberg, 2023, 2022; Norton 2020). It is notable that mainstream analyst Vyvan Kinross, discussing Middle East policy in general (2020: pp. 223-224), argues that:

The facts that are now known about the methodologies used by the West in its successive wars in the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan lead to the conclusion that nothing in the projection of warfare beyond its immediate context in combat zones can ever be

as simple as it seems or taken at face value; evidence shows that perception and reality have in some respects become distorted through the prism of the professional propagandist in a way that now makes it hard to distinguish between the reality of events and a managed perception of them.

Clearly there is much research, analysis and writing to be done on these events and practices.

### *The new Cold War: Russia and Ukraine*

Finally, the emergence of a new Cold War during the 2010s focused on Ukraine, and the current increase in conflict in the Middle East — which includes a genocidal campaign by Israel against the Palestinians — demand detailed research by academics. These events largely appear to reflect the continuance of Western power projection in the context of substantive shifts from a unipolar international system toward a multipolar one (Boyd-Barrett, 2016; Diesen, 2024; Ganser, 2023; van der Pijl, 2018a). At the same time, these historic tectonic shifts in the structure of the international system are complicated by the strength and reach of transnational actors such as global corporations and global governance structures (van der Pijl, 2018b; Woodworth, Witt and Cobb, 2023; Beeley and Robinson, 2024).

All of these events are replete with deep event-like activities, strategic deceptions and propaganda. They appear to include CIA involvement during the events in Ukraine in 2014 when the democratically elected government was overthrown, the 2014 Maidan massacre, (Katchanovski, 2023), the MH17 shootdown (van der Pijl, 2018a), the Trump-RussiaGate deception (Boyd-Barrett, 2019; Boyd-Barrett and Marmura, 2023), the 2018 Skripal attack in the UK (Norman, 2022; 2023), the Nord Stream bombing in 2022 (Hersh, 2023), and controversy related to the extent of Israeli foreknowledge of the October 7 incursion by Palestinian fighters, which preceded the current genocide being pursued by the Israeli government (International Center for 9/11 Justice, 2024). The current crises and conflict in the Middle East, which include a potential regional conflagration involving Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Iran, highlights the continued relevance of the 9/11 ‘regime change’ war policy described earlier.

In sum, establishing that 9/11 was a manufactured war trigger should lead to a fundamental re-evaluation of the wars and conflicts fought since 9/11. The overarching official justification for many of these conflicts, based as it is on a ‘war on terror’, is

fraudulent whilst there are multiple indications that deception and propaganda have been employed across the various conflicts. Mainstream academia requires a fundamental reorientation if it is to begin the task of accurately describing and explaining these major and ongoing conflicts in the international system.

## 2) *Domestic-level consequences of the 9/11 crime*

The now infamous Patriot Act, ushered in on the back of 9/11, allowed for widespread surveillance of private communications by government authorities and, more widely, an era of increased surveillance across liberal democracies (Bauman et al, 2014). Surveillance culture is multifaceted. In the UK for example, the *Prevent* policy targeted ‘non-violent extremism’ through proposed real-world and digital world surveillance and included application of cognitive/behavioural therapies to counter extremist beliefs and attitudes. Today, the scale and reach of surveillance society is breathtaking, with data gathering being exploited for commercial and political objectives, the latter including the monitoring of dissent, the control of purported ‘disinformation’, and even aspires to ‘predictive policing programmes’ and ‘precrime arrests’ (Webb, 2021). Civil liberties across Western democracies have also been eroded through granting authorities greater power to detain and interrogate individuals. Indeed, torture has been authorised by the US and British governments (Blakely, 2020; Raphael et al, 2016).

Paralleling the extension of surveillance mechanisms are **drives to suppress dissenting voices in the public sphere**. Academic Cass Sunstein, appointed as head of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in 2009, advocated the use of cognitive infiltration techniques, whereby dissident communities are infiltrated by individuals seeking to shore up official narratives. Sunstein specifically references 9/11 as a ‘conspiracy’ problem (Sunstein and Vermeule, 2009). These covert techniques mirror longstanding infiltration and disruption tactics employed by state intelligence services (Glick and Smith, 1989). At the same time, the conspiracy theory label has been routinely used in order to discredit any questions regarding the 9/11 event (Ellefritz, 2014; deHaven-Smith, 2014).

All of these activities run hand-in-hand with predictable patterns of **media deference to authorities** (Domke, 2004; Gygax and Snow, 2013; Kellner, 2004; Woodworth, 2010) whilst equivalent processes of debate suppression have operated across mainstream academia and education in general (de Lint, 2020, 2021; Hughes, 2020; Jacobs and Lewis, 2011; Wyndham, 2017; Zuberi, 2013). There is much work to be done here but, in particular, there

is extensive scope for the kind of detailed media analysis provided by Walter and MacQueen (2020) who documented how widespread media reports of explosions during the destruction of the WTC towers (2020) were rapidly supplanted by official propaganda narratives implemented by news anchors and commentators in the hours and days following 9/11 (MacQueen and Walter, 2022).

The **legal realm** is another area in which open and rational debate is limited and due process compromised. Criminologist Willem de Lint (2020, 2021) identifies 9/11 as belonging to the class of ‘Apex crimes’ involving ‘an event of paradigm or norm changing significance’ (de Lint, 2020: p. 1159) in which authorities quickly and without proper inquiry attribute responsibility and which then, subsequently, sets up the ‘parameters of the official review into the event to confirm the already-named sequence of causation and significance’ (de Lint, 2020: p. 1159). A key dynamic here involves the circumvention of proper criminal and legal processes in ways that allow official narratives to persist unchallenged. Prominent examples of such problems are evident in the battle by families of 9/11 victims seeking legal action against Saudi Arabia (Ashton v. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2017), the *Lawyers’ Committee for 9/11 Inquiry* (2018; 2021), Grand Jury petitions relating to both 9/11 and the anthrax attacks, efforts by a British family to obtain a new inquest for 9/11 victim Geoff Campbell (Campbell family, 2024), and the ongoing Guantanamo commissions which include the alleged mastermind Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (Rosenberg, 2024) who has remained detained since 2003 and is still awaiting trial. Given his role in exposing US war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, the case of Julian Assange, the founder of *Wikileaks* who until only very recently was under threat of extradition to the US, can be understood as one of the key examples of the extent to which the post-9/11 Western legal apparatus has failed (Melzer, 2022).

Finally, perhaps the subject of most taboo listed here concerns the extent to which **lower-level false flag actions** might have been conducted across Europe and North America, aimed at maintaining support for the global ‘war on terror’. The existence of Operation Gladio during the Cold War era, involving clandestine activities of the intelligence services, including the execution of terrorist attacks blamed on left wing activists, is well established (Bale, 2007; Ganser, 2004 and 2014; Scott, 2012) and includes notorious attacks such as the 1981 Bologna station bomb that killed 82 people. For that act of terrorism, two secret service agents were successfully convicted (Vulliamy, 1990; Wilkins, 2020). Since 9/11, multiple alleged terror attacks have occurred across Europe, attributed to Islamic fundamentalist or al-Qaeda linked terrorism, but which have attracted skepticism on the part of some researchers.

These include the 7/7 bombing in London in 2005 (e.g., Ahmed, 2006), the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, and the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris 2015 (e.g., Barrett, 2015). Given the historical backdrop of Operation Gladio and what is now established about 9/11 itself, it is entirely plausible that the skepticism expressed about many of these attacks is warranted and deserving of further detailed and systematic research. A cursory examination of the most critical academic sub-discipline, *Critical Terrorism Studies*, demonstrates minimal engagement with these issues, a lacuna that should be recognised as a fundamental misstep in this body of scholarship.

The unifying aspect of all these domestic-level consequences is the drive to control and discipline populations through coercive and ‘non-consensual’ mechanisms. As Bakir et al (2019) set out, propaganda, broadly defined, works via multiple mechanisms including deception through manipulation of information and actions in the real-world working through incentivization and coercion. Whether suppressing questioning and debate via censorship, or instilling fear through false flag terrorism or other forms of the ‘politics of fear’, the common objective is to organise the beliefs and conduct of populations through coercive, and therefore *undemocratic*, means. As such, they are all part of what Scott describes as the upward shift of power that we see whenever deep events occur (Scott, 2011: p. 4). **As with work on the geopolitical trends during and following the global ‘war on terror’, there is a need for more academics to step outside ‘problem-solving/administrative’ paradigms and engage in research that is sufficiently critical of existing power structures and the official narratives that serve to maintain them.**

### *3) Exploration of other SDEs, SCADs, and deep events*

The body of critical scholarship shedding light on the truth of what happened on 9/11 provides a starting point for **further analysis of SDEs, SCADs and lower-level deep events that emanate from the deep state and deep politics**. The scale of the deception, the confidence with which the actions and cover-up were carried out, and the political rationale for the crime, all provide important insights regarding the nature of our world and the exercise of power. The deep state, or shadow government, is evidently extensive and capable, able to initiate major crimes against the population whilst ensuring no one is held to account. It follows that the degree to which the deep state penetrates public-facing institutions of government and civil society, including the civil service, academia, media and popular culture, is likely to be extensive. The willingness of certain political elites, or ‘dark forces’ as

Scott (2015) describes them, to commit crimes against humanity is disturbing. If we accept that ‘(p)ower tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely’ (Dalberg, 1887), and given the upward shift of power evidenced by the 9/11 case, away from the public and up toward governing elites, the 9/11 SDE is unlikely to be a one-off whilst lower-level deep events, which involve policies related to anything less than structural-level change, are likely to be even more commonplace.

For example, and as noted in the introduction, the partially on-going COVID-19 ‘pandemic’ has all the hallmarks of being a structural deep event (forthcoming Robinson and Ryan, 2024). The initial declaration of a global public health emergency in the form of a pandemic was based upon a deceptive claim that a completely new and unusually dangerous pathogen existed. In reality, the misuse of a PCR test to identify individuals supposedly infected with the pathogen led to a hugely exaggerated count (Ryan, 2020), whilst rules for recording COVID-19 deaths led to huge overcounting. The official position now of PANDA, a group of statisticians and experts studying the COVID-19 event since 2020, is that there is no evidence of a novel and dangerous virus emerging in late 2019/early 2020. Instead, fraudulent testing protocols and misattribution of iatrogenic harms to COVID-19 created a false impression of a dangerous pandemic (PANDA, 2024).

The manipulated science was accompanied by extensive propaganda designed to exacerbate public fears (Dodsworth et al, 2024; Shellenberger, 2023; Sidley, 2024) whilst anyone questioning the official response was subjected to smears and accusations of being conspiracy theorists (Robinson, 2022b; Shir-Raz et al, 2022). Censorship and control of media was routine (Woodworth, 2022). And, just as the 9/11 event ushered in the global ‘war on terror’ and accompanying regime-change wars, COVID-19 has seen a variety of economic and political agendas pushed forward under the cover of the proclaimed global public health emergency. These include the (in)famous ‘Great Reset’ advocated by the influential World Economic Forum (WEF) (Schwab and Malleret, 2020), the ‘Going Direct’ initiative designed to avert a crisis in the financial markets (Titus, 2020; Vighi, 2021), and the consolidation of global-level biosecurity regimes which are seen by some commentators as the keystone of a new form of totalitarianism or fascism (Bell, 2023; Chossudovsky, 2021; Elmer, 2022; Davies, 2022; Hughes, 2024; Kennedy, 2022; Kheriaty, 2022, van der Pijl, 2022; Robinson, 2023(22)).

Looking back into history, the JFK assassination is increasingly well understood as an SDE, and, just last year, US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr stated unequivocally that the CIA was involved in the murder of his uncle (Sullivan, 2023). Similar to 9/11,

although even more so, a large dissident literature exists documenting the deceptions and criminality surrounding the JFK assassination. Scott identifies the assassination as an SDE and substantial evidence exists indicating that JFK was murdered by actors seeking to maintain Cold War tensions and ensure US military escalation in Vietnam, policies opposed by JFK (Douglas, 2010). Similar to the 9/11 and COVID-19 SDEs, the assassination involved manipulation of events including corrupted scientific analysis of JFK's murder (e.g., Mantik and Corsi, 2024) and manipulation of official investigations (e.g., Horne, 2009). The other assassinations of the 60s and 70s — Robert F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Malcom X in particular — should form part of a thoroughgoing critical analysis of this period in history (e.g., Pease, 2018; DiEugenio and Pease, 2003).

In sum, it is increasingly clear that existing political and economic power elites engage in a politics of fear in which events, both imagined and real, are being instigated and exploited in order to exercise power and control over populations. Comparative case study analysis, or structured, focused comparisons (George, 1979), across SDEs can enable systematic and rigorous analysis of these events which is both reproducible and that contributes to theory testing and development (George, 1979: p. 70). And, as noted at the start, such analyses must involve genuine multidisciplinary in order to properly evaluate both the scientific and political aspects of SDEs. **A research agenda building upon the SDE and SCAD concepts is necessary in order to describe these anti-democratic phenomena, explain how they function, and provide at least some possibility for producing predictive templates that might allow for their prompt recognition and challenge.**

## Imagining Different Futures

This paper has thus far presented some of the voluminous evidence now accumulated that confirms the official 9/11 narrative is false and that the remaining most likely explanation for what happened revolves around it being a self-inflicted wound, i.e., a false flag or 'manufactured war trigger' (MacQueen cited in Walter, 2023). Understanding this reality leads, inevitably, to questions regarding the ensuing wars, civil liberty restrictions and the multitude of nefarious approaches to suppressing dissent. Sadly, there is no escape from having to recognise how serious and bleak the situation is that we find ourselves in. We are confronted with intimidating levels of propaganda, deception, and exercise of concentrated political power. Accordingly, we need more than just accurate descriptions and explanations

of the reality of the world we inhabit. We also need a strong normative commitment to change.

The research agenda mapped in this article opens the door to a more thoroughgoing reappraisal of the state of our democracies, and the need to develop strategies that enable us to imagine different and better futures. This can involve thinking through what is needed to restore democracy, regain our autonomy, and develop or repair political and social structures. It can also involve developing pathways to accountability and justice. Such work should focus on critical evaluation of how key institutions — including government and the civil service, international organizations, corporations, news media, academia, professional associations, and civil society organizations — failed during SDE events such as 9/11, COVID-19 and the JFK assassination.

**Work should also focus on developing structures and mechanisms that might avert such catastrophic failings including the strengthening of citizens and social movements that might counter concentrated elite power.** Given the central role that strategic deceptions and propaganda play with respect to the execution and cover-up of SDEs and SCADs, it is imperative we develop ways of minimising their pernicious effects on purportedly democratic public spheres. There is also a need to develop strategies for coping with psychological trauma and societal disruption created by wider awareness of SDEs and SCADs.

Overall, as we work to describe the manipulations, deceptions and crimes surrounding us, finding ways of navigating ourselves out of the undemocratic and deep event-riddled mess that we find ourselves in today should become front and centre.

## **Conclusion**

To date, the vast bulk of academic inquiry has circumvented serious engagement with the events of 9/11. Because of these blind spots, most scholars operate under false assumptions about what happened that day. The wealth of independent analysis conducted across the 9/11 research community, some of which is reported in this article, provides a strong basis upon which to refute the official narrative. Scientific analysis confirming the controlled demolition of the Twin Towers and WTC 7, multiple inconsistencies coupled with implausible claims surrounding the alleged hijackings and piloting of the airliners, and circumstantial evidence related to high-level planning and organisation within the US

government/deep state and across several key US allies, all support the hypothesis of 9/11 being a ‘manufactured war trigger’, or false flag, carried out in order to initiate multiple wars.

An array of consequences flowed from the 9/11 event, involving multiple strategic deceptions across the ‘regime change’ wars and the suppression of dissent via multiple mechanisms including mass surveillance and coercive approaches to managing and suppressing dissent. Furthermore, 9/11 is one example amongst a series of SDEs which include the JFK assassination and the COVID-19 event. Despite the efforts of a relatively small number of academics and researchers to explore these issues, the bulk of academia, whether because of self-censorship motivated by careerism or self-deception born of indoctrination by propaganda, has remained firmly within the domain of problem solving/administrative research whilst even scholarship professing to be critical fails to grapple with the true nature of 9/11.

We are, however, in a position to address these lacunae via work already developed and which is described in this article. But a major reorientation is necessary and one that involves serious and sustained engagement with developing an accurate assessment of the role of strategic deceptions and propaganda across liberal democracies along with development and application of conceptual frameworks such as Scott’s ‘structural deep event’ and deHaven-Smith’s ‘state crimes against democracy’. The research agenda that results from this reorientation promises to strengthen our understanding of how power is exercised, further expose the so-called ‘deep state’ and ‘deep politics’, as well as recalibrate our assessment of the extent to which putatively democratic systems have been eroded. It can also provide the basis for creative and progressive thinking about how democracies can be salvaged from their current state of disrepair.

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**About the Author**

Dr. Piers Robinson (PhD, MSc, BA Hons) is the research director of the International Center for 9/11 Justice and co-editor of the *Journal of 9/11 Studies*. He has 25 years of experience researching and writing about international politics, communications, and propaganda. His most recent academic post was as full professor and chair in Politics, Society and Political Journalism at the University of Sheffield. Across the course of his academic career, he has published many articles in leading academic journals, including the *Journal of Communication*, *Review of International Studies*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *European Journal of Communication*, *Political Studies*, and *Critical Sociology*. Since leaving Sheffield in 2019, he has been involved in the development of a number of initiatives relating to the study of propaganda, including the Organisation for Propaganda Studies, the Working Group on Syria, Media and Propaganda, the Working Group on Propaganda and the 9/11 Global ‘War on Terror’, and the online journal *Propaganda in Focus*. In the last four years, both 9/11 and COVID-19 have become a central research concern for Dr. Robinson.