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**COMPARISON OF 9/11 CONSPIRACY
THEORIES WITH THE U.S. POLITICAL
REACTION TO THESE EVENTS**

Bakalářská práce

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*I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.*

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Author's signature

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List of Abbreviations

9/11	Known term for September 11, 2001 attacks
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BPAT	Building Performance Assessment Tea
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence, intelligence agency of Pakistan
NASA	The National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
NORAD	North American Aerospace Defense Command. Organization founded in 1957 in Colorado.
U.S.	United States
The PATRIOT Act	Uniting & Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001
WTC	World Trade Center
WTC 1	The North tower of WTC
WTC 2	The South tower of WTC

Abstract/Annotation

TROMBLY, Božena, Bachelor thesis advisor Mgr. Jiří Flajšar, PhD. *Comparison of 9/11 conspiracy theories with the U.S. political reaction to these events*. [Bachelor thesis]. Olomouc: Pedagogical Faculty at Palacký University Olomouc, 2021 (44 pages; 1 attachment)

The bachelor thesis deals with the September 11, 2001 attacks and analyzes the most prominent and controversial conspiracy theories and compares them with the U.S. official statement. The main goal is to objectively report both sides of the story. The first chapter briefly describes the official version of the 9/11 attacks. The next chapter talks about conspiracy theories and further divides them into categories. The following chapter describes the U.S. political reaction to these attacks and talks about Patriot Act and other important changes in legislation and security measures. The last chapter focuses on the withdrawal of all U.S. military forces from Afghanistan announced recently by President Joe Biden and further analyses the opinions of specialists on this decision.

KEY WORDS: 9/11 attacks, conspiracy theory, Al-Qaeda, Taliban, World Trade Center, Pentagon, U.S. government, flights, withdrawal of U.S. forces, Afghanistan

Abstrakt/Anotace

TROMBLY, Božena, vedoucí bakalářské práce Mgr. Jiří Flajšar, PhD. *Srovnání Srovnání konspiračních teorií o událostech 9/11 s politickou reakcí USA na tyto události*. [Bakalářská práce]. Olomouc: Pedagogická fakulta, univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2021. (44 stran; 1 příloha)

Bakalářská práce se zabývá útoky z 11. září 2001, analyzuje nejvýznamnější a nejkontroverznější konspirační teorie a porovnává je s oficiálním prohlášením USA. Hlavním cílem je objektivně podat zprávu o obou stranách příběhu. První kapitola stručně popisuje oficiální verzi útoků z 11. září. Další kapitola hovoří o konspiračních teoriích a dále je rozděluje do kategorií. Následující kapitola popisuje politickou reakci USA na tyto útoky a hovoří o Patriot Act a dalších důležitých změnách v legislativě a bezpečnostních opatřeních. Poslední kapitola se zaměřuje na stažení všech amerických vojenských sil z Afghánistánu, které nedávno oznámil prezident Joe Biden a dále analyzuje názory odborníků na toto rozhodnutí.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA: útoky 11. září, konspirační teorie, Al-Káida, Talibán, Světové Obchodní Centrum, Pentagon, americká vláda, lety, odsun amerických vojsk, Afghánistán.

Introduction

“The general population doesn’t know what’s happening, and it doesn’t even know that it doesn’t know.”

-Noam Chomsky (Twitter July, 2020)

The tragedy of September 11, 2001 was a turning point not only for the United States of America but also for the whole world. America suffered the most severe terrorist attack on their own soil and even after 20 years, new conspiracy theories about what happened on the incriminated day when the towers of the World Trade Center fell to the ground are still appearing in the media and on the internet. People are still asking the same questions and want answers. Countless citizens do not believe the story of 9/11 as described in the 9/11 Commission Report.

According to the official statement, the USA was attacked by a group of 19 suicide operatives from a Middle East organization Al-Qaeda who crashed three commercial planes into the most significant American buildings. Two planes hit the towers of the World Trade Center on Manhattan, one plane hit and damaged the Pentagon building in Washington D.C. Fortunately, the last plane did not reach its target destination which was believed to be the White House or the U.S. Capitol and crashed into the field in a rural area of Pennsylvania. (The 9/11 Commission, 2004)

The 9/11 Commission report (2004) also states that “more than 2,600 people died at the World Trade Center; 125 died at the Pentagon; 256 died on the four planes. The death toll surpassed that at Pearl Harbor in December 1941.” - source A lot of people have lost their lives that day and we will never know how many have died afterwards from respiratory ailments or fighting against terrorism in Iran, Afghanistan and other countries. Unknown numbers of people from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan have also been killed or injured; therefore, the true number of fatalities is incomplete or untold and there is no doubt that the 9/11 act of brutality was an event of historic importance not only because of the scale, but because of the choice of victims. The vast majority who lost their lives were innocent civilians. It was something else that was lost that day and the Greek dramatist Aeschylus understood well what it was when he said in 448 BC: **“In war, truth is the first casualty.”** (Summer & Swan, 2001)

1 The 9/11 Attacks and their place in US history

The morning tragedy of “Nine-eleven” was a big shock and surprise for many people around the world. Everyone was terrified by the horrible images they saw; people were in a state of horror over what have happened in the Northeast. At first, they thought it was a horrible accident but soon realized it was something worse as the attacks continued. Could it have been prevented?

The following statement taken from the preface of the Commission Report (2004) points out the laxity and unpreparedness of the USA for such attacks: “September 11, 2001 was a day of unprecedented shock and suffering in the history of the United States. The nation was unprepared.” It further confirms that it should not have been an unexpected event by saying: “The 9/11 attacks were a shock, but they should not have come as a surprise. Islamist extremists had given plenty of warning that they meant to kill Americans indiscriminately and in large numbers.” Although Usama Bin Ladin himself had not been considered a big threat until the late 1990, the imminence of Islamist terrorism grew stronger and stronger over the past ten years. (The 9/11 Commission, 2004)

Furthermore, to support the claim of laxity and unpreparedness, the staff report read out in front of relatives of the victims at the hearing in Washington, also indicated that officials of NORAD and the Federal Aviation Administration were "unprepared in every respect" for such attacks. (O'Clery, 2004)

The Commission’s staff also made a conclusion in the report, that NORAD and FAA "struggled, under difficult circumstances, to improvise a homeland defense against an unprecedented challenge they had never encountered and had never trained to meet." (The 9/11 Commission, 2004)

Coincidentally, defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld made a prediction the morning of 9/11, right before the attacks at a meeting in Pentagon. He said that in the following months there would be an event “sufficiently shocking that it would remind people again how important it is to have a strong, healthy Defense Department.” (Summers & Swan, 2011)

Additionally, a few months later, on Friday 7 December, 2001 Donald Rumsfeld said live on CNN interview with Larry King: “We could have today, this hour, stopped or prevented a terrorist attack in the United States and not even know precisely that for two, three, four months.” (US Department of Defense, 2001)

1.1 The rise of a terrorist threat prior to the 9/11

The conflict did not begin on 9/11. The history of terrorist attacks in the USA had begun long before then and the United States was always one of the main targets for international terrorism. In October 1993, Somali tribesmen received help from Al-Qaeda in an event called “Black Hawk down” when the U.S. helicopters were shot down which killed and wounded a lot of people. It was also the same year in February that Ramzi Yousef and his helpers used a truck bomb to bring down the World Trade Center. Compared to the 9/11 attack, only 6 people were killed and more than one thousand of people wounded. Ramzi Yousef also planned to blow up many U.S. airliners in Pacific. During the Clinton presidency, Bin Ladin was not considered a huge threat and according to a CIA report document he was just an independent man working with other individuals or governments to support the Islamic causes and they saw him more as a financier of terrorism. (The 9/11 Commission, 2004)

After the 9/11 attack, a former CIA Director James Woolsey serving under the Clinton administration admitted that the U.S. intelligence was not doing their job properly in the 1990s and their performance started to improve when a small group of CIA officers formed a unit which focused primarily on Bin Laden. In August 1996, they realized how dangerous Bin Laden was when “Declaration of Jihad” was being introduced. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

In February 1998, Bin Laden started to publicly show the hate for American society. Al-Qaeda killed and wounded a lot of people using truck bombs at the U.S. embassies in Kenya, Nairobi and other African countries and planned an attack on L.A. International Airport that was fortunately prevented when a bomb smuggler was arrested on the Canadian border. Also, in 2000, Al-Qaeda suicide bombers used explosives to blow a hole into the U.S. Navy destroyer and killed 17 American sailors. (The 9/11 Commission, 2004)

None of these previous assaults were as catastrophic and sophisticated as the 9/11 attacks which were far more elaborate, precise, and devastating. However, everyone in the U.S. only realized that Islamic terrorists were not joking and their intention was to kill a large number of American people on the day of the attacks. (The 9/11 Commission, 2004)

1.2 Known facts about the 9/11 attacks

It is almost impossible not to know what happened on September 11, 2001 because it was constantly broadcasted in the media all over the world. The following chapter will briefly describe the US government version of the 9/11 attack.

Tuesday morning on September 11, 2001, people were getting up and heading to their work or school, many of them were going to airports to fly across the country that day and had no idea what was about to happen when they said goodbye to their loved ones. It was a nice sunny day, typical for New England this time of the year. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

The same morning, four American planes were hijacked by 19 Islamic terrorists from an Al-Qaeda group, presumably financed by Osama bin Laden. According to many publications and the commission report, this was supposedly a revenge act for America's support of Israel during the Persian Gulf War in the Middle East. It was Tuesday morning 8:46 A.M. and the world was startled when the first plane Boeing 767 hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. A commercial airplane, American Flight 11 had sliced into the North tower between 93rd and 99th floors. Thanks to a quick reaction of a French documentary maker Jules Naudet the impact was caught on tape. The liquid on the windows seen by many witnesses was almost certainly from the wing tanks and people on the plane were instantly dead while other people trapped inside the building were desperately trying to get out of the building and some of them decided to jump out of the windows to escape the heat and smoke. According to many witnesses, many of the souls on the upper floors died instantly. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

Seventeen minutes later at 9:03 A.M. the second plane, United States Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower which could be seen live on television. At that time, everyone

realized it was not an accident and that U.S. was under attack. The planes seriously damaged the structure of the buildings and another big shock came when the South Tower collapsed. About 30 minutes later, the North Tower followed. The Trade center complex, known nowadays as “Ground Zero” transformed into a ghost town. Atlantic Monthly correspondent William Langewiesche wrote: “All that remained standing, were a few skeletal fragments. People walked instead of running, talked without shouting, and tried to regain their sense of place and time.” (Summers & Swan, 2011)

Around fifty thousand people worked each day in the Trade Center Towers and about 17,000 were there that morning. The Twin Towers, each 110 stories high loomed over Manhattan and they were the tallest buildings in the city and important symbols of American financial power. Huge number of workers were not at work when the first plane hit. They were getting breakfast or buying coffee, and many stopped to vote before going to the office as it was a primary election day in the city. A great number of lives were saved that morning by them being late for work but the total number of 2600 victims that died in the towers is still a very high number. A lot of them died instantly after the first hits, many of them did not survive being trapped inside the buildings, large number jumped down from the structure and the passengers on the planes, firefighters, police officers and medics had to be counted as well. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

The third plane had a much closer target. It was the American Airlines Flight 77 which hit the west side of the Pentagon situated in Arlington (Virginia). It was 9:37 A.M. and the crash and fire damaged a part of the recently renovated building. A lot of people were also killed and wounded here. According to the US Department of Defense, 64 passengers on the plane and 125 people in the Pentagon were killed among many that were injured. (The 9/11 Commission, 2004)

The last flight was number 93 and was probably the most known of all. Based on the documentary by Duncan Bulling called *9/11: The Final Minutes of Flight 93* released on September 2020, the bravery of passengers and crew on the flight to San Francisco prevented a lot of death by stopping the terrorists from finishing their job. The director of the documentary worked with forensics specialist and used cockpit recordings to describe what happened. The cockpit tape on the final minutes of Flight 93 remains classified but relatives of the victims were allowed to listen to this tape. Because the

flight was delayed 40 minutes, the passengers had enough time to find out what had happened in New York City. Unfortunately, all of them were on board and terrorists already took control of the plane. At 9:30 A.M. a passenger Tom Burnett called his wife to tell her that a person had been stabbed and killed and asked her to report the hijacking to authorities. By 9:37 A.M. passengers were confined in the back of the plane and were encouraged to call their loved ones. They said goodbye to their families hoping there was still a little bit of a chance for survival and together with the flight attendants decided to fight the hijackers. It is believed that the plane got out of control during the fight as panicked terrorists hoped to disorient the attackers and a few minutes later crashed into a field in rural area of Pennsylvania at 10:10 A.M. Twenty-nine minutes later, the military was cleared to take action, but it was too late and nobody from this flight survived. There are many speculations about the target. It is believed that the last plane was to be directed to hit the White House or the U.S. Capitol in Washington DC. Nevertheless, we will never know for sure. (The 9/11 Commission, 2004)

Frank Culbertson, a NASA astronaut, the only American who at the time of the 9/11 attacks was watching the disaster from space told his story about the 9/11 attacks. “About 400 miles away from New York City, I could clearly see the city. It was a perfect weather day all over the United States, and the only activity I could see was this big black column of smoke coming out of New York City.” When zooming in with his camera he also witnessed the collapsing of both towers. “I assumed tens of thousands of people were being hurt or killed. It was horrible to see my country under attack.” (Graff, 2019)

These are the basic facts about 9/11 described in the Commission report and considered the “official story of 9/11”. According to many historians and experts, the attacks can be deemed as one of the most horrible and tragic terrorist acts in the history of humankind due to the number of irreplaceable losses, as well as the level of global impact on economy.

1.3 America responds to the 9/11 attacks

The immediate reaction of the public to the 9/11 attacks was shock, horror, and fear. There was no doubt the consequences would be significant. Several crucial questions arose straight away: Who is the enemy? What are the reasons and how should we react?

In the evening of September 11, 2001 at 9:00 P.M., the U.S. President George W. Bush finally made the following speech from the Oval Office: “Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.” He continued to explain to the public why the attack occurred. “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world.” Later he also added: “The search is underway for those who were behind these evil acts. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.” (G. W. Bush, 2001 in American Rhetoric)

From his speech it was obvious that the President declared a war on terrorism and made it clear that it was terrorists who were responsible for these attacks. He reassured the public that the enemy would be found and punished. He also clarified from the start that Bin Laden and his followers would not be the only targets.

According to Condoleezza Rice, the administration was not going to negotiate with Taliban. Washington soon issued the ultimatum for Afghanistan to hand over Bin Laden. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

The 9/11 Commission determined that Rumsfeld raised a question about which other countries might have been responsible for the attack and where the attackers could be. Right from the beginning he was suggesting invading Iraq. At first, the President’s focus was mainly on Afghanistan and Bin Laden but the pressure on him to act against Iraq continued. Based on the pressure, CIA promised to create agency teams to capture and kill terrorists around the world. Bush was labelling this coming fight as a “war on terror”. Also, on September 17, 2001 the President told reporters: “I want justice.” A few days later, CIA gathered a team and just two weeks after 9/11 they were on the ground in Afghanistan. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

Not long after the attacks, distrust of foreigners could be felt among ordinary Americans and new organized racist groups started to attack the Muslim community and other nations. Most people wanted to close the borders, a lot of people stopped flying and used cars instead. Life in the United States began to change rapidly. These events also had a huge impact on the economy, increasing the cost of fighting counter-terrorism, security measures, and unemployment began to rise. People were worried about their

families, about their own existence. Their patriotism deepened, and American flags were hanging everywhere. No one dared to say anything against the country.

On November 6, 2001 CNN news published an article with President's familiar statement: "You're either with us or against us in the fight against terror." (G. W. Bush, 2001 in CNN news)

The biggest FBI investigation began shortly after the incidents. More than half of the entire agency worked on the investigation and the ruins of the World Trade Center became the largest crime scene. The same day that the tragedy took place, matters concerning the American economy, helping families, increasing security at airports began to be addressed. At the same time the immigration department's cooperation with the FBI began. Based on George W. Bush's speech about the threat to democracy, Congress passed the Patriot Act which made it the law to give US agencies better information to fight terrorism. At the beginning of the Act, it is explained that the first priority is to prevent future terrorist attacks and that is why the Patriot Act should have played an important role in preventing USA from being destroyed by terrorism. And it is also stated in the Act that only minor changes would be made in the existing law in order to preserve the life and liberty of the American people. (Department of Justice, 2019)

The Patriot Act is divided into several points. The first point focuses on the use of means to detect and neutralize terrorist threats in a timely manner for example, wiretapping or having access to financial records which can be used to resolve all possible terrorist cases. The second point emphasizes the importance of cooperation between agencies (CIA, FBI, etc.) which can lead to faster and more efficient investigations. The Patriot Act removed legal barriers that prevented law enforcement agencies and national defense communities from communicating and coordinating their work. The third point requires an amendment to the law on the use of new technologies that can help locate the perpetrator or detect hackers. It also allows law enforcement officials to obtain a search warrant anywhere a terrorist-related activity occurred. The fourth point enacted an increase in penalties and fines for people committing a terrorist act. The US government said that without the Patriot Act, it would be much more difficult or even impossible to succeed in preventing another catastrophic terrorist attack. (Department of Justice, 2019)

The Patriot Act caused a lot of protests among U.S. citizens worried about the protection of their civil liberty and about the invasion of people's privacy.

In 2002, as a response to the attacks the United States government also created the Department of Homeland Security which is a cabinet-level department of the federal government of the United States charged with preventing terrorist attacks within the United States, reducing the U.S. vulnerability to terrorism, and minimizing damage and assisting in recovery from terrorist attacks in the U.S. (US Department of Homeland Security, 2002)

In late 2002, the National Commission for Terrorist Attacks on the United States met for the first time. It was created by congressional legislation and signed by President G. W. Bush. The task was to investigate the facts and circumstances under which the events of 9/11 took place. The commission went through almost two and a half million files and documents and listened to over 1200 people from different countries, including various senior officials. The report contains over five hundred pages and the main goal was to present a report with the most accurate description of events that had happened on September 11, 2001. The document was submitted almost three years later on July 22, 2004 and provides a brief overview of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, the origins of all 19 terrorists and the exact timetable they followed. Among other things, it also describes the immediate reaction of the rescue services which intervened at the crime scene. The last pages contain some specific recommendation that the commission extracted from the investigation. These include organizational changes in intelligence agencies, tighter migration policies or prevention of the continued growth of Islamic terrorist groups. (The 9/11 Commission, 2004)

When the first shock from the attack was over, people not only in the U.S. but all over the world started to ask questions. How is it possible that terrorists could carry out an attack so easily and achieve so much damage? In many, this has raised much doubt and mistrust of the U.S. administration and the ways in which the incidents had been investigated. Immediately after the attacks, various alternative explanations began to appear in the media which challenged practically every explanation of the commission's conclusions. Some claimed that the U.S. government itself was involved in the attacks and wanted to divert attention from other political agenda. Others argue that explosives were used to destroy the Twin Towers and the Pentagon and other theories.

2 CONSPIRACY

The term conspiracy theory can be replaced by the word conspiracy - a conspiracy in the sense of factors of power standing against ordinary people, against society. However, the word conspiracy is rarely used in the media or in society itself. Unlike the concept of conspiracy theory, conspiracy evokes a sense of a more serious problem. And is often considered a mystery or a fabrication of paranoids against whom many sceptics stand. A conspiracy is also mentioned in professional definitions, of which the definition of the American historian Daniel Pipes can be mentioned. He describes a conspiracy as "the fear of conspiracies that do not exist." (Pipes 2004) Thus, although the term sounds like an unfounded concern, a large number of conspiracy theories rely on convincing evidence.

2.1 What is conspiracy theory?

The following chapter offers a number of definitions given by authors dealing with the topic of conspiracy theories. It does not aim to evaluate this phenomenon it only aims to provide an overview.

An important author dealing with conspiracy theories is Michael Barkun who also considers conspiracy theories difficult to define, despite the frequent use of the term. He offers the statement that: "The essence of conspiracy beliefs lies in attempts to delineate and explain evil." Continues with "conspiracy theories view history as controlled by massive, demonic forces." (Barkun, 2013)

Mathias Broeckers (2006) believes that conspiracies do not need a long explanation because he thinks that they are something very common and people are accustomed to them. He also points out that conspiracy theories have been around for centuries. His basic explanation is following: "A and B agree to gain an advantage over C is part of everyday life on all social and natural levels, and it is just as ordinary that A and B leave C in the dark about their little agreement." And he continues "Conspiracies are the most natural thing in the world." (Broeckers, 2006)

Robert A. Wilson (1998) wrote in his book the following: "In principle, every single individual behaves as a conspirator, like in a game of poker."

Marie Heřmanová (2021) believes that Conspiracy theories are on the rise when there is a great uncertainty and at the same time there are several possible explanations. She pointed out a great example of the 9/11 events that created an uncertainty and demanded some explanation.

We live in the 21st century - a century where information plays a major role in every human activity. Nowadays, the amount of information available to public is increasing and with it also the threats. A very important fact is that a large amount of information brings a large number of recipients who are not always able to understand it and are overwhelmed by it due to their lack of competence. Many spread misinformation and lies intentionally or by mistake. There is almost zero trust in the institution and due to the huge development of communication technologies, conspiracy theories have regained their strength. According to Thomas (2020), “the internet and social networks have given the believers of conspiracies faster and more massive dissemination than ever before.” (Thomas, 2020)

2.1.1 Main principles of conspiracy theory

In the book called *A culture of conspiracy: apocalyptic visions in contemporary America*, Michael Barkun (2013) points out that conspiracy theories can affect how things are perceived and affect the mankind. He expresses an opinion that there are three main principles found in almost every conspiracy theory and describes them as following:

•**Nothing happens by accident.** The first principle is based on the claim that coincidences and accidents have been deliberately removed from the world, and that this is all because it has been so determined. In other words, anything that happens was intended.

•**Nothing is as it seems.** Conspirators want to deceive public in order to hide their activities. To sum it up, it is important not to believe what we are told or what appears to be truth.

•**Everything is connected.** Basically, the conspiracists are convinced that the pattern could be seen everywhere and everything is linked together and very well thought out.

2.1.2 Barkun's types of conspiracy theories:

Barkun, (2013) also points out that although all conspiracies share the generic characteristics described above, they could be further differentiated into several categories according to their extent.

•Event conspiracies

Conspiracy is responsible for a limited discrete event or set of events. The focus is mainly on a precise target and the best-known example would be the assassination of the former president J. F. Kennedy, the spread of AIDS in black community and other theories.

•Systematic conspiracies

A systematic conspiracy is believed to have broader goal and usually focuses on a region, country, or the entire world. We could consider communism, the Catholic Church, Jews or Masons a good example. If we look at the first group, we see that mainly individuals or small groups, are involved in conspiracy theories. In the case of the second group, it is the organization that prepares its own plan and then sets the plan in motion.

•Super conspiracies

It is the combination of the above conspiracies and it is assumed that there are multiple conspiracies linked together hierarchically. According to conspiracy theorists, there is a powerful evil man at the top of this hierarchy who manipulates the people who follow him. Super conspiracies are very complex and the master conspirators are believed to be invisible and operating in secret. Famous authors on these conspiracies are David Icke, an English conspiracy theorist who has written over twenty books and beliefs in the New Age conspiracies as well as other theories such as the 9/11 attack was organized by the Illuminati. Currently, he was a protest speaker against lockdown which took place on Trafalgar Square in London on September 26, 2020. The second famous author is William Cooper who died in late 2001 and one of his many beliefs was that HIV/AIDS was a man-made disease.

•The Empirical Soundness of Conspiracy Theories

Empirical Soundness of Conspiracy Theories are claimed to be pragmatic and pertinent and could also be tested. There are elaborate presentations of evidence created in order to prove the truth. According to a well-known historian Richard Hofstadter: “They are trying to prove that the unbelievable is the only thing that can be believed.” (Barkun, 2013)

This is a very brief explanation of the typology of conspiracy theories and all the essentials concerning the actors and their main activities. For the purpose of this theses, it appears to be sufficient in order to get familiar with this topic. Also, Barkun (2013) tries to point out that such a theory can affect how things are perceived and how they affect humankind.

2.2 Conspiracy in Contemporary America

Political scandals, war and economic chaos made conspiracy theories boom in current America and they are growing. The public has less confidence in the government after the Nixon’s administration failure and the Vietnam War. During an earlier period, conspiracists viewed communism and external threats as the most dangerous while nowadays they mostly consider the U.S. government the essential threat and a dangerous enemy. A lot of the most popular conspiracy theories in these days have focused on the FBI, CIA and the National Security Administration. For instance, CIA was accused by some conspiracists of doing medical experiments on American citizens in Jonestown, Guyana executed by a CIA agent Jim Jones. (Critchlow et al.,2008). According to Michael Meiers (1989), the cult leader Jim Jones leased 3,000 acres in Guyana, South America and established Jonestown in 1977. Jones convinced his followers to kill people and then commit suicide. It is believed that the medical mind-control and HIV experiments were done and orchestrated by the CIA and their agent Jim Jones. FEMA was accused of intentionally sparking a disaster in order to gain control of the U.S. government and participate in the “New World Order.” (Critchlow et al.,2008)

The theory became popular in March 1991 when President George H. W. Bush presented a speech to Congress in which he emphasized the possibilities for global

cooperation to eliminate communism in a post-Cold War society to spread democracy. “We can see a new world coming into view. A world in which there is the very real prospect of a new world order,” he said in the speech. (Bush, 1991 in Exum, 2020)

This New World Order theory apparently connects all political events and claims that an insanely clever and ruthless secret organization tries to oversee the whole world. There is a belief that this has been going on for centuries where a powerful group of people, including politicians, rich celebrities and even the British royal family, has been manipulating global events. It is also believed that this small group of international elitists is manipulating governments, industries, and media all over the world using the central banking system. In the past it was the conspiracy of the Communist sympathizers, but this theory was destroyed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the focus was directed to the United Nations as the controlling force. For a smaller group of conspirators, the CIA was responsible for a lot of assassinations and tragedies in the 1960s. (Domhoff, 2005)

According to Domhoff (2005), these kinds of allegations have been around for decades but they have always been proven wrong and usually illegal actions and deceptions are eventually uncovered. He thinks that it is more logical to assume that “leaders act for their usual reasons, such as profit-seeking motives and institutionalized roles as elected officials.” (Domhoff, 2005)

Only a few samples of political conspiracies in contemporary America were portrayed in my thesis. Although there certainly are a number of other conspiracy theories, a few were mentioned and briefly described to illustrate what conspiracy theories are. Conspiracy theories are growing, and more are appearing every day. Great examples would be for instance Coronavirus conspiracies and the most current and discussed QAnon Conspiracy. These conspiracy theories could be found everywhere in media. A large amount of conspiracy theories available today reflects the disharmony between the government and U.S. citizens and there are many more because American people remain very conspiratorial just like their ancestors. Even after 20 years since the September 11 attacks occurred, more inaccuracies and discrepancies are being discovered about this attack and a lot of people are demanding a satisfactory explanation.

3 The most prominent conspiracy theories about 9/11

Many articles and millions of books about this topic have been written all over the world about the 9/11. In addition to the official version which is still repeated by some mass media with dog's devotion, a number of unofficial theories have been circulating on the Internet almost from the beginning which considered the attacks to be staged by the government and secret services.

Opponents of conspiracy theories argue that the U.S. government did not have enough time to avert hijacked planes. According to supporters of the official version, the conspiracies about 9/11 are lies and the media is only trying to increase their popularity and earnings. The attack of 9/11 was an event of the century and is compared to the attack on Pearl Harbor. In any case, it will certainly occupy generations of researchers and historians. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

As mentioned above, several theories have been formulated by conspiracists declaring an involvement of the federal government and believing that the Bush administration plotted the terrorist attack to mainly give them the green light to go to Afghanistan and Iraq and other agenda. The most famous 9/11 conspiracy figures are David Ray Griffin and Steven E. Jones who drew on detailed analysis of airline videotape and photographs crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. They are convinced that explosives were installed into the buildings by the government and that the fall of the buildings was not caused by extreme heat created by jet fuel burning as the official version claims. Griffin and Jones also claim that the Pentagon was not hit by the American Airliner but missile was used to damage the building. These theories will be described in more detail later in this chapter. Both of Griffin and Jones' theories have been debunked in an issue of Popular Mechanics but are still very popular on the internet convincing a lot of people. ((Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

There are many conspiracy theories that attribute to the planning and execution of the 9/11 attacks and only the most prominent and known were chosen and will be described into more detail in the following chapter.

3.1 World Trade Center

The collapse of the World Trade Center is among the most extensively studied structural failures in American history. A lot of experts from academic fields as well as from private industries were involved in the study and the investigation took more than five years. The conclusion of these experts was consistent and they agreed that the cause for the collapse of these buildings was a combination of physical damage from the airplane hit as well as long exposure of heat. (Dunbar & Reagan 2011)

3.1.1 The history of World Trade Center

The World Trade Center located in Manhattan, NYC was considered one of the “Seven Wonders of the Modern World” and built by Rockefeller brothers in the 1960’s. They were members of a wealthy and powerful family. The job was given to The Port of New York Authority that was controlled by the governors of New York and New Jersey and had a big experience with building tunnels and tall bridges in the area. The original size of 5 million square feet of office space doubled to 10 million square feet and the area enlarged to 16 acres. The Port Authority decided to build the world’s tallest building making it even taller than Empire State Building from 1931. (Dwyer & Flynn, 2005)

The two towers were designed by Minoru Yamasaki who decided to create a revolutionary building instead of the traditional construction of most skyscrapers in New York. The towers were 110 stories high tubular structures, supported by closely spaced steel columns encased in aluminum. (History.com editors, 2019)

In some respect, this advanced design created structures more fragile. Joe Magnusson, CEO of Magnusson Klementic Associates, an engineering firm from Seattle, Washington points out that these structures are mostly air with thin layers of steel and concrete and that they only look massive and strong. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

After a lot of criticism from powerful figures who worried about the safety of the buildings, plans had already been made to design buildings that would withstand a collision with a fully loaded largest plane that existed at that time. (History.com editors, 2019)

Leslie Robertson, chief colleague in the WTC project admitted that even though the towers were engineered to sustain the impact of Boeing 707, he also admitted that he was not sure if they considered the fuel tank explosion causing the fire damage. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

The building's structure was tested for the first time on February 26, 1993 when a bomb installed by extremists lead by Ramzi Yousef exploded in the parking garage and injured more than thousand people and killed six. The Port Authority then spent over \$700 million on security and safety measures, such as safer access to parking space and electronic identification for building tenants and other safety upgrades. The renovated building was ready to reopen only 20 days after the attack. (History.com editors, 2019)

In July 2001, the whole complex was leased to a developer Larry Silverstein who had bought several properties in Midtown and Lower Manhattan in the 1970's. He signed a historic 99-year lease on buildings One, Two, Four and Five World Trade Center which gave the Silverstein Properties the right to rebuild the structures if destroyed. The lease was signed for \$3.2 billion and six weeks later, the buildings were destroyed. Not long after the attack he announced his plan to rebuilt the World Trade Center and after a long dispute with insurance companies he is rebuilding the entire World Trade Center with the world's greatest architects and artists. He envisions the buildings to be not only magnificent but also strong enough to resist explosives. (Curkin, 2020)

3.1.2 What happened to the Twin towers?

The official version is that two hijacked planes hit the Twin towers on 9/11 and the combination of physical damage from the aircraft crashing into the buildings as well as the exposure of the fires made them collapse. World Trade Center 7, located about 110 meters from the Twin towers is probably the biggest mystery. This building collapsed later the same day despite the fact that no plane hit it. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

A new study by Alaskan university researchers denies the official version from 2008 done by NIST. A Structural Reevaluation of the Collapse of World Trade Center 7 released on March 2020 claims that the fire was not the cause for the collapse of WTC 7 (Hulsey et. al., 2020)

3.1.3 The Investigation of the Twin towers collapse

There are several conspiracy theories regarding the World Trade Center. A lot of conspiracy theories have been appearing online stating that the structural failure was not caused by the load of fuel from the aircraft. Steven E. Jones, a physicist from Brigham Young University published a paper stating that the “building fires caused by the crash would not have been sufficient enough to melt the steel, therefore explosives must have been used to bring down the towers.” (Jones in Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

Some experts agree that the steel frames did not even need to melt in order to collapse. It was enough to just lose some of their structural strength therefore less heat would be required. NIST thinks that external fireproof insulation was damaged which left the columns more vulnerable to the heat. According to Forman Williams, a professor of engineering at the University of California “The fuel was the ignition source, it burned for maybe 10 minutes. It was the rest of the stuff burning afterward that was responsible for the heat transfer that eventually brought (the towers) down.” (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011).

On the other hand, conspirators raised a question against the findings of NIST and other experts who claim that the temperature was not high enough to melt steel which contradicts the presence of molten metal. The experts explained that because the debris pile was burning for weeks confined and losing minimal heat, it is possible that at that point the fires could have reached sufficient temperatures to melt steel. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

Magnusson explained: “When we’re talking about the debris pile and the insulating effect, the fires down there are completely different than the factors affecting the steel in the building.” (Magnusson in Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

Furthermore, Alan Pense from metallurgical engineering at Leigh University pointed out that “the photographs shown to support the argument were unconvincing or showed materials other than steel that melt at much lower temperatures.” (Pense in Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

Mark Loizeaux, the president of Controlled Demolition Inc., also rebutted the theory of controlled demolition. He explained that when the explosive goes off it cuts through steel with force instead of burning it through. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

But according to Griffin (2008), one of the frequently asked questions whether the WTC steel was tested for explosives or thermite residues was answered “NIST did not test for the residue of these compounds in the steel.” In other words, the tests were not necessarily conclusive according to NIST. Griffin (2008) further believes the tests were not intentionally performed because the results would have supported the point that the explosives had been used in the buildings. He also has a theory on how the explosives could have been planted in the buildings. His suggestion is that President’s Bushes relatives could have been involved in planting explosives because they were the principals of the company that handled security of the WTC. It was also confirmed that right before the 9/11 attacks a crew of men was working on elevators on the west side of the building for approximately five or six weeks. These facts were not mentioned in the report by NIST. (Griffin, 2008)

3.2 The collapse of 7 World Trade Center

The most interesting conspiracy theory is the 7 World Trade Center, a third tower that collapsed in Manhattan. This 47-story building located about 110 meters from the Twin towers collapsed later that day in just a few seconds without being hit by a plane or sustaining significant damage. (Bell, 2018)

According to the official version under the investigation of the NIST, the building collapsed due to fires and no remnants of explosives were found. There was an independent examination performed by the BPAT which consisted of volunteer engineers. Variety of technological processes was used. This study states the following: “Certain issues should be explored before final conclusions are reached and additional studies of the performance of WTC 7, and related building performance issues should be conducted.” (Shyam-Sunder et. al, 2008)

The 9/11 Commission Report contains no information about the collapse of WTC 7. This was the biggest mystery and Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth claimed to have an evidence of demolition using explosives. The organization founded in 2006

demanded an independent investigation of the 9/11 attacks. The founder of the organization Richard Cage claims that it was a controlled demolition and completely disagrees with the NIST explanation of the collapse of Building 7. Scott Grainger, a fire protection engineer, and a member of this organization told the BBC that the fires were dispersed on the floors and that they were not burning at once therefore there could not have been enough heat to cause the building's collapse. (BBC 2, 2008)

This claim is supported by testimony evidence of two New York officials working in the WTC 7, Barry Jennings and Michael Hess who testified that the morning of 9/11 an explosion occurred in the building, shortly after the first attack which happened at 8:46 A.M. They also testified that when they tried to report this at the Office of Emergency Management Command Center on the 23rd floor in the same building, nobody was there and only half-eaten sandwiches and warm coffee cups were left there. It looked like the people had left in a big hurry. After a few phone calls they decided to make, they were told to leave right away. The elevators were not working at the time due to power outage and coming down the stairs Jennings stated that he could feel an explosion beneath them and when he looked out of the window, both buildings were still there. Their testimony was not fully examined by ignoring the fact that his partner Hess gave an interview about half-mile away before noon which means that Jennings must have been rescued earlier than NIST reported. (Griffin, 2008)

According to Griffin (2008), another witness William Rodriguez also reported a massive explosion in the building's basement at 8:46 A.M. Two independent 9/11 researchers Jeremy Baker and Matthew Everett have suggested that WTC 7 was probably intended to collapse right after the collapse of the North Tower which would have made it less suspicious.

Jesse Ventura (2011), a former Independent governor of Minnesota suggests to keep in mind that other more damaged buildings in the same complex never collapsed. He points out that buildings 5 & 6 were smaller and also damaged both by fire and structurally. He also mentioned in his book that a few hours before the attack, the alarm system went on test status in the same building.

There have been a lot of witness testimonies against the claim that WTC 7 was brought down by explosives. Fire Department interviews confirmed that they had anticipated the

collapse of the building 7 because the falling North Tower had hit this building earlier that day. A senior chief Frank Fellini said that the steel between third and sixth floor had been ripped out and with the combination of several fires in the building, they were concerned about Building 7. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

Some speculations exist that the developer Larry Silverstein who owned the 47-story office building since 1987 had intentionally brought it down because of this statement: “We’ve had such terrible loss of life, maybe the smartest thing to do is pull it.” (Silverstein in Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

There has been a lot of ado about the statement, therefore in 2005 Silverstein tried to clarify his words saying that he was misinterpreted and that he did not want to pull down the building but to protect the firefighters by withdrawing them from the building. The common term “pull” is used by firefighters and means removing personnel from a dangerous structure. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

Another discovery could support the hypothesis of government’s involvement when a premature announcement of the building falling was made at 11:07 A.M. by CNN correspondent Alan Dodds Frank. Other premature media reports have been discovered later in the day and before the collapse of the Building 7. (Griffin, 2008)

BBC reporter Jane Standley was announcing the collapse live on TV at 5:14 P.M. while the building could be seen in the background. A video retrieved from the archives confirms the reporting happened over twenty minutes before the collapse of WTC Building 7 which is referred to as the Salomon Brothers Building. (Standley on YouTube, 2018 retrieved from the archive)

Griffin (2008) emphasized that in 2007 the video was placed on the internet and Richard Porter, the BBC head of news responded they were not part of conspiracy and that it must have been an error. The explanation by BBC is clearly not sufficient enough or even adequate. These premature announcements were certainly not insignificant and there are still no satisfactory explanations. (Griffin, 2008)

To this day, the group of Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth still demands the correction of NIST 2008 report about 9/11 terrorist attack regarding the collapse of Building 7. The organization partnered with the University of Alaska Fairbanks and

released the draft report called *A Structural Reevaluation of the Collapse of World Trade Center 7*. (Polya, 2020)

This 126-page report was released in September 2019 and after a four-year study of the collapse of WTC 7, the conclusion is that “fire did not cause the collapse of WTC 7 on 9/11, contrary to the conclusions of NIST and private engineering firms that studied the collapse. It also states that “the collapse of WTC 7 was a global failure involving the near-simultaneous failure of every column in the building.” (Hulsey, 2020)

The report claims that some basic errors were made by NIST such as the rigidity of the outside building frame. Robert Korol, one of two peers reviewing the UAF study claims that the debris from WTC 1 could not cause structural damage to the steel of WTC 7. The team executed large computer simulations and looked carefully at the critical area which was a column 79 and they concluded that they were not exposed to heat because there were no fires. (Hulsey, 2020).

To sum it up, researchers published a groundbreaking study that completely refutes the official version of the events of September 11, 2001. According to the UFA study (2019), the cause of the collapse of building 7 of the World Trade Center was not a fire, but a controlled demolition. The importance of the study is vast for the future of the United States and the whole world. “Now would seem an opportune moment for academics to begin talking 9/11 truth seriously” urges Hughes in his article. (Hughes, 2020)

3.3 The Pentagon

The massive Pentagon building, home of the United States Department of Defense, was completed 70 years ago, on January 15, 1943. It is a symbol of America’s military strength and ranks among the largest office buildings in the world. The pentagon-shaped building has over 116,000 square feet and can accommodate 26,000 employees who can travel to and from Washington and the surrounding area by basic means of transport. The building has seven floors (five of them above ground) and consists of five concentric pentagons. One side of the largest of them measures over 200 meters. The individual sides of each of the pentagon connect three corridors on each floor, together measuring the corridors in the building for almost 30 kilometers. The foundation stone

of the building was laid on September 11, 1941, so the giant building was completed in less than two and a half years. In 1994 the building undertook extensive renovation due to security precautions after US bombings in Kenya and Tanzania and more than \$1 billion was approved for these renovations. Its great and reliable construction is also evidenced by the fact that on the day of the 60th anniversary of the start of construction, September 11, 2001, it survived the impact of a plane hijacked by a terrorist without much difficulty. (History.com editors, 2019)

3.3.1 The 9/11 attack on Pentagon

The attack on Pentagon occurred at 9:37 A.M. on September 11, 2001, almost an hour after the first plane hit the WTC. Despite of hundreds of witnesses confirming the Boeing 757 hitting the building, there are some people backing a theory about a missile or a different type of plane smashing into Pentagon. A big promoter of this theory Thierry Meyssan, a French author of the book *The Horrifying Fraud* is arguing that the attack was staged and executed by the U.S. military with the intention to justify future wars. It was published in the U.S. and widely repeated in a popular documentary *Loose Change*. He claimed that the only visual evidence of the plane striking the Pentagon was a set of shots taken from a security camera which was not sufficient enough. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

Ventura (2011) confirmed that The Department of Justice refused to release 85 videos of the event and he further confirms the insufficient proof of evidence by pointing out that important Pentagon financial information was destroyed in the attack just a day after Rumsfeld had publicly announced that approximately 2.3 trillion dollars could not be tracked.

Griffin (2008) furthermore suggests why the testimony of so-called eyewitnesses is not reliable. According to the official report, hundreds of witnesses saw a Boeing 757 hit the Pentagon. However, the statements of 152 witnesses differed and after an advanced testimony examination by Jerry Russell it was found out that only 31 of them provided credible and realistic statements. After Russell 's closer examination of these witnesses, he found out that most of them were either media employees or worked for Federal Government and 21 of them had contradictions and errors in their testimonies and therefore the alleged eyewitness support should not be considered credible and

“corroborating physical evidence would be required, and that evidence does not exist.”
(Russell in Griffin, 2008)

On the contrary, the official statement points out that a lot of commuters confirmed it was an American Airlines passenger jet. Additionally, the victims on board of the plane Olson and May called their families about the hijacked plane and furthermore, almost all of the victims, including the five terrorists were identified by DNA tests. Only small pieces of the American Airline fuselage were found on the site which supports the conspiracy theories claiming it was not a plane that hit the Pentagon. However, photos reveal a small piece of the American Airline fuselage on the grass in front of the Pentagon building which was collected by FBI agents within minutes of the crash. One of the first responders was a structural engineer Allyn E. Kilsheimer who is sure he was holding parts of American Airline plane in his hands, confirming that it was the same pile of debris where the black box was discovered later. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

There are several reports and photographs taken before the FBI removed the evidence and the parts on the photographs are confirmed to be consistent with the plane that crashed. Mrs. Carter, an American Airlines flight attendant who served refreshments to the cleanup crews recalls seeing obvious parts from American Airlines. She also confirmed that a bracelet found belonged to her friend flight attendant Renee May. “I saw pieces of our American Airlines.” She also continued “If anyone thinks the plane did not crash then what happened to all my friends and where did all those body parts come from? Every crew member’s body was found.” Ted Olson’s wife Barbara’s remains were also found in the ruins of Pentagon. On this account, Griffin pointed out that Olson worked for the Bush administration. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

Furthermore, Griffin responded with “For all we know, human remains from two different sites could have been combined by FBI and military personnel.” Him and others also still insist that the phone calls from the Flight 77 have been fabricated declaring that the two conversations were not possible to be made by cell phones in 2001. AT&T records now show that seat-back phones were used instead of cell phones. (Griffin in Summers & Swan, 2011)

3.4 Flight 93

The fourth plane Flight 93 scheduled for an 8 A.M. departure took off with a 25- minute delay due to heavy traffic on Newark's runway. The hijacked plane was the only one that did not reach its target and instead crashed into the field near Pennsylvania. The Federal Aviation Administration had only 35 minutes to alert the military about the 4th plane being hijacked after they had received this information by a Cleveland air traffic controller and due to miscommunication and unpreparedness for this type of situation, fighters were not sent to stop the Flight 93 while in the air. Meanwhile, because of the plane's delay from the airport, passengers found out about the attack on U.S. and soon realized that their plane has been hitchhiked as well. Several phone calls were placed by the passengers to their loved ones and Tom Burnett told his wife about their plan to take back the plane and attack the hijackers. Eighteen minutes later, the plane crashed. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

The 9/11 Commission report states that the original plan of the terrorists was to fly the plane into the U.S. Capitol. It was also confirmed from the cockpit recordings that although it is not clear who forced the plane to crash into the field, the hijackers were attacked by the passengers later recognized as heroes. A lot of books and films were produced about this heroic act but conspiracy theorists do not believe this story. Some believe that the plane was hit by a missile, others argue that there were no terrorists on the plane and the phone calls are not real. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

David Corn, an investigative writer and a harsh critic of the Bush administration said that despite the U.S. government's involvement in terrible double-dealing and possible murders, he thinks that the conspiracies about the government's involvement "are absurd." (Corn in Summers & Swan, 2011)

According to Summers & Swan (2011), despite mistakes and omissions in the official reports and corruption of the U.S. government along with the intelligence community, there is no reason to believe the official statement regarding Pentagon is false. He believes the facts were properly and excessively documented and thus there is a sufficient evidence available to the public.

3.5 Foreign governments

In the latest theory, other agencies or even governments of different countries such as Saudi Arabia, Mossad - the Israeli's secret service or Pakistan' intelligence service are blamed for the attacks. (The Week, 2018)

Michael Pardo (in Critchlow et al., 2008) lays out his believe that not only did the US government had a prior knowledge of the 9/11 attacks but also that Al-Qaeda was not involved, and Israel's secret intelligence carried these attacks. In his report, he points out that there was some blackmailing between the United States and Israel governments behind the scenes right after 9/11. Israel was threatening to release sensitive information about the U.S. which had been obtained by Israeli spies. As a result, Bush administration then launched an investigation into Israeli spying. (Pardo in Critchlow et al., 2008)

Summers & Swan (2011) wrote in their book that despite the denials by the Israeli leadership, it has been admitted by several former Mossad agents that the U.S. soil is full of different levels of Israeli spies. The first information that started to appear immediately after the 9/11 attacks was that the USA was aware of the Israeli prior knowledge and that they were the main suspect.

It is believed that the real truth about 9/11 is still being covered and the attack was done by Israeli intelligence Mossad and misinformation campaign was created and controlled by the US media in order to blame Islamic organization Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden to gain control of oil and other agenda. To further support this theory, Pardo also comments that Israel is believed to be "the third most powerful nuclear force in the world." (Pardo in Critchlow et al., 2008)

These theories were widely accepted in Arab and Muslim world and according to a very detailed research findings published in the book *Who Speaks for Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think*, published in the USA in 2008, many Arabs mostly Palestinians, a high number of Egyptians and around 46 percent of Jordanians do not doubt Israel's guilt. (Esposito & Mogahed, 2008)

Ventura (2011) blames Saudi government for 9/11 and comments negatively on the decision to let six planes of Middle Eastern nationals leave the U.S. soon after 9/11.

Most of them were from Saudi royal family and supposedly they did it out of fear for their safety. There are rumors that half of the people were relatives of Osama bin Laden.

In 2019, CNN wrote that the U.S. Department of Justice would release the name of a man attached to the Saudi government to help two terrorists responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks. The victims of the family blame the Saudi government for helping to coordinate the 2001 attack. Fifteen of the nineteen members of Al-Qaeda were citizens of Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, according to some members of the commission of inquiry, a sufficiently detailed investigation was also not conducted in this regard. According to CNN, the decision to disclose the identity of the man associated with the attacks is surprising. According to CNN, there has been a long-standing dispute over the role of the Saudi government in Washington. As early as 2012, two names were mentioned that are associated with the attacks, and the unknown name belongs to a relatively high-ranking official of the Saudi government, who allegedly gave orders. (Shortell, 2019)

Summers & Swan (2011) are convinced “the 9/11 Commission Report blurred the truth about the Saudi role and by the time it was published in July 2004, more than a year had passed since the invasion of Iraq, a country that-the report said-had nothing to do with 9/11.”

Richard Falkenrath, a former deputy homeland security adviser to President Bush wrote that Al-Qaeda was not only “led and financed largely by Saudis, but also received a huge help and support from Pakistani intelligence.” (Falkenrath in Summers & Swan, 2011)

Bin Laden had operated in Pakistan since 1979 and the World Trade Center bomber in 1993 attack Ramzi Yousef had roots there. Also, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the key figure of the entire operation of 9/11 operated from Pakistan planning the attack of 9/11 and was finally captured there. A few years before the 9/11 attacks Bin Laden also said in one of his speeches that Pakistani people were extremely devoted to Islam and praised the Pakistan’s military. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

Ventura (2011) points out that FBI director Robert Mueller’s testified that Pakistan’s ISI intelligence head Mahmoud Ahmad had ordered one of his people to transfer \$

100,000 to Mohamed Atta, one of the leading terrorist figures of 9/11 attacks. When the story about the wire transfer came out, Ahmad retired. Muller also stated that Pakistan was one of the most complicated countries. (Ventura, 2011)

Summers & Swan (2011) state that ISI was also protecting Bin Laden in one of his houses in Afghanistan by installing security cameras there. Peter Tomsen, the U.S. special envoy told the Commission that an alliance existed between ISI, al Qaeda and the Taliban and that ISI collaborated closely with Saudi intelligence and Pakistani officers were receiving money from the Saudis. ISI was characterized and described as “the most influential body in Pakistan.” (Tomsen in Summers & Swan, 2011)

Although, after 9/11 the Pakistani cooperation against al Qaeda improved, the U.S. government never trusted the Pakistani government knowing that ISI continued to communicate with Bin Laden. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

Finally, in May 2011 it was reported that Osama Bin Laden had been found and killed in Pakistan without no advanced notice to Pakistanis by the U.S. The reason was not to threaten the secret mission. However, the officials from both sides stated that Pakistan may have been informed a short time in advance and some sources claim to have been working with the US on surveillance of the building in Abbottabad. It was also reported that the ISI was present there which of course was later denied by President Zardari as well as ISI chief Hamid Gul. According to many witnesses, Osama bin Laden was unarmed, and his corpse has not been shown to the public. The body of Osama Bin Laden was unloaded into the sea according to the Muslim funeral rites and no photographs were made public either. However, according to several witnesses and DNA tests his identification was confirmed. Al-Qaeda acknowledged his death and responded to the American people, that they should be ready for their bloody revenge. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

3.6 Other conspiracy theories about 9/11

Undoubtedly, there are a number of other and interesting conspiracy theories and strange coincidences such as suspected inside stock trading, the Air defense stand down theory. Some people are convinced that the military should have been able to react to the 9/11 attacks within a few minutes. Others are doubting the hijacker’s flying skills or

even the identity of these terrorists. There are people that are trying to prove that Silverstein had foreknowledge of the accident and was involved in the destroying of the WTC in order to collect double amount of insurance money. Another issue that has been raised by the Ttruth believers is the two exterior holes in the Pentagon. They think the holes are not big enough to have been made by a Boeing 757. (Dunbar & Reagan, 2011)

More and more theories regarding 9/11 attacks could be added but only the most debated and widely known conspiracy theories were researched and described into more detail and compared to the official version with the conspiracy arguments. Naturally, 9/11 conspiracy theories will never go away entirely and no matter how much they will be disapproved, the most dedicated plotters will never be convinced.

On March 3, 2002 David Corn wrote an article called *When 9/11 Conspiracy Theories Go Bad*. He thinks that conspiracy theories may seem rather irritant and that “they compete with reality for attention.” He continues in another paragraph. “Perhaps there's a Pentagon or CIA office that churns out this material. Its mission: distract people from the real wrongdoing. Now there's a conspiracy theory worth exploring. Doesn't it make sense? Doesn't it all fit together? I challenge anyone to disprove it.” (Corn, 2002)

4 US political reaction to 9/11 and the aftermath

The 9/11 attacks have completely changed the political situation in the world and highlighted the great threat posed by Islamic terrorism. The United States has therefore decided to both strengthen its security and retaliation and launch a war on terrorism. They gave an ultimatum to Afghanistan to hand over Osama bin Laden and when this did not happen, they decided to attack Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan early October, 2001 and a ground offensive followed shortly in order to defeat Taliban. Many terrorists and radicals were captured and tortured at the Guantánamo base in Cuba during interrogations allowed by the Bush administration. (Švamberk, 2010)

In September 2002, the Bush Doctrine was introduced. The National Security Strategy of the U.S. was released and focused mostly on three important points. First point was to strike first, the second point was one-sided action of the US only and the last point was to do what is necessary to spread freedom around the world and democracy. Reactions to the Bush Doctrine were different. Some believed that it was naive and unrealistic to emphasize the spread of democracy around the world, others believed that it was necessary to act strong and to protect the American people. (Gregg II, 2020)

The threat of terrorism continued and played a role in the attack on Iraq in March 2003. Saddam Hussein not only did not have weapons of mass destruction, which was one of the main reasons for the attack, but also had no ties to al Qaeda. (Summers & Swan, 2011)

The Bush administration has also increased security measures in the United States, which restricted American freedom and complicated the lives of U.S. visitors. Stricter controls were introduced, and the United States began taking fingerprints of visitors from abroad and demanding biometric passports. Security also appeared on the decks of many routes, and the doors to the cockpits were modified so that terrorists could not get through them. They began to massively monitor and listen to phone calls and also control Internet communications. The Patriot Act became a part of everyday life and people had to give up their privacy and freedom for their security. (Švamberk, 2010)

Additionally, a new Department of Homeland Security was set up by the Bush administration to primarily coordinate the activities of various secret services and to

monitor possible terrorist activities. The FBI has begun to make the fight against terrorism a top priority and has deepened binding cooperation with the CIA. (Gregg II, 2020)

However, terrorism did not disappear. Concerns about terrorism were confirmed by other attacks, such as the Madrid one on 11 March 2004 with 191 victims or the London one on 7 July 2005, which claimed 56 victims. Fear was also fueled by failed assassinations or plans for them, such as the detonation of a dozen planes heading from Britain to the United States, or the assassination of the New York subway, or a Nigerian attempt to detonate in December 2009 aboard a plane to Detroit. Therefore, there were other restrictions in air transport such as body scanners, no drinks on board etc. (Švamberk, 2010)

In 2002 which marked the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, two bright columns of light were introduced to public symbolizing the Twin Towers and the victims. It is called “The Tribute in Light” and we can see it every year on the same date and place where the attacks occurred. It is reported to be visible from over 60 miles away. (History.com editors, 2019)

Preparations to build One World Trade Center began in order to honor the victims and is a symbol of freedom and pride as well. This building is now considered the tallest building in United States. The structure has 104 stories with an observation deck which offers visitors sweeping views of New York City. (History.com editors, 2019)

Doubts about 9/11 will definitely be a long-lasting phenomenon. Despite the fact that much of the alleged evidence of the conspiracy was refuted by official reports from the U.S. government, doubts remained. A lot of people still believe that the U.S. government is behind the 9/11 attack. (Thomas, 2020)

Among the authorities who vehemently reject this conspiracy theory is the left-wing intellectual and activist Noam Chomsky. He claims that “the whole theory is nonsense, which does not bother the American government and is, on the contrary, in its interest.” (Chomsky, 2016)

5 Withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Afghanistan

Taliban was never completely defeated to this day and finally after 20 years the U.S. troops will be retrieved from Afghanistan. The current U.S. President Joe Biden announced on April 13, 2021 that all remaining 3,500 US troops as well as NATO allies would be withdrawn from the country on September 11, 2021. The departure will occur exactly twenty years after Al-Qaeda terrorists attacked New York and Washington with hijacked planes. (Gardner, 2021)

Biden has decided to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor Donald Trump in the Afghan case. American soldiers have been in Afghanistan for almost 20 years but their withdrawal already begun by Democratic President Barack Obama. Donald Trump has often spoken of the need to end this endless war. Last year, Trump agreed with the Taliban on an agreement to gradually withdraw the U.S. troops in exchange for a promise that the Taliban would not provide refuge to any terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State. (Kubátová, 2020)

According to Reuters (2020), Taliban called on Biden to stick to an agreement to remove troops, stressing to the future government that adhering to the agreement is the most sensible and effective solution to end the conflict between the two countries.

Missy Ryan and Karen DeYoung (2021) wrote an article in The Washington Post that reactions to this decision differ. In the article they also mention Senator Mitch McConnell who thinks this decision is a serious error. Also, according to Ryan and DeYoung (2021) in March 2021 the U.S. Congress was warned by John Sopko, an independent special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction. He said that “withdrawal without a peace deal in place would be a disaster.” (Sopko in Ryan & Young, 2021)

Ryan and De Young (2021) also point out that republican Adam Smith, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee thinks this is a good decision and admitted in an interview: “I don’t doubt for a second there is going to be violence and turbulence” he explained that difficult choices have to be made and believes that U.S. has already made a huge effort in Afghanistan. (Smith in Ryan and De Young, 2021)

Retired Gen. Colin L. Powell, a former secretary of state and the leader at the beginning of the U.S. war in Afghanistan also supports the decision to leave. He compared this situation to 1989 when the Soviet Union decided to leave Afghanistan after a decade of occupation. “I’d say we’ve done all we can do. It’s time to bring it to an end.” (Ryan & DeYoung, 2021)

Will it be the end of the endless war and will the Taliban rule Afghanistan after the departure of the Americans in the future? At the moment, it is clear that the Taliban has not been defeated militarily, and what will happen when the Americans and other NATO troops stop supporting the central Afghan government with its armed forces is uncertain.

But what is clear, after twenty years of the attacks on the U.S. we are still being affected by the changes that happened afterwards. And who is the winner? We are still witnessing huge disturbances in the Middle East. Two dictators have been overthrown, oil prices have dropped down in most countries but the Palestine issue is still unsolved. Not many people are aware of the fact the problems of Palestine were the main cause of the 9/11 attacks.

Conclusion

The aim of my bachelor's thesis was to approach the most common conspiracy theories of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. I explained what conspiracy theory was and included Michael Barkun's typology of conspiracy theories. I described a few recent and known conspiracy theories but focused primarily on the 9/11 conspiracy theories that are the most prominent and known by public. Some of them are proclaimed by the Truth Movement group which has thousands of supporters and has gradually penetrated the political scene of the United States.

We cannot confirm or refute conspiracy theories. They are an integral part of human history. Their boom occurred mainly after the assassination of the president Kennedy and thanks to the Internet, people can get quickly to information. After the attacks on September 11, 2001 the Internet began to spread news about what had happened. Some people blamed the Jewish community, others the US government and after the publication of the official report, the people split into two camps. The first group believed the official version while the other group rejected the official report and began to arise conspiracy theories. We know how conspiracy theories come into being, but we do not know how to separate them from the truth. But it is up to each of us how we interpret the theory and whether we will believe it or not. This thesis presented an opportunity to tell other sides to many stories and let the reader judge.

Among the people who believe in conspiracy theories is the Truth Movement group represented mainly by Griffin and Jones who demand the truth about the events of September 11, 2001. The members even created their own website where they share the knowledge and information. They are convinced that the U.S. government is covering what really happened and not telling the true story about the 9/11 tragedy.

A lot of people still ask how it is possible that the U.S. government did not know about the attack in advance. The Bush administration refuted any conspiracy theories and instead focused on the global war on terrorism and the capture of Osama bin Laden who was believed to be the main perpetrator of the 9/11 attack. However, nothing would be possible to execute without financial assistance, without the supply of weapons and

similar material, but mainly without the people who help them along with the plan. Nevertheless, these people will never confess to helping them and remain anonymous.

Many things have changed for each of us and that is why this day is such an important event in our history. We all lost our freedom that day. American society will never sleep in peace again because they lost the feeling of safety. The world before was different and this terrible event started a new era not only in the U.S. but also throughout the world. The fear and suspicion will stay among us forever and conspiracies will keep flourishing.

In conclusion, as more time passes, no matter how much we try to describe the feelings to our children who did not experience or live through the 9/11 attacks, it is important to remember these days so we could tell them and keep the memory of all the people that lost their life due to this terrible event. I also believe that a new investigation should be open because we still owe the truth not only to our children but to all the families of victims of 9/11. This topic is very close to me because I experienced this terrible event while living in the U.S. and I could monitor the situation immediately after the attacks and watch how it was affecting people around me. The visit to the Ground Zero memorial was also an extremely strong moment for me and I will never forget the following quote by Virgil which is the motto written at the ground Zero memorial: **“No day shall erase you from the memory of Time.”** (Virgil, 19 BC)

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APPENDICES



FIGURE 1: EACH OF THE 2,983 WATERCOLOR SQUARES IN MOSAIC REPRESENTS A VICTIM OF THE 2001 AND 1993 ATTACKS. (PHOTO: JIN LEE)

Retrieved from: <https://911memorial.org/connect/blog/stories-hope-2983-shades-blue>



FIGURE 2: TWO BEAMS OF LIGHT REPRESENTING THE FORMER TWIN TOWERS OF THE WTC IN ANNUAL TRIBUTE TO REMIND US OF THE LOST LIVES ON 9/11. (PHOTO: JIN LEE)

Retrieved from: <https://www.911memorial.org/visit/memorial/tribute-light>

RÉSUMÉ

Tato práce se zaměřuje na popis útoků z 11. září 2001, analyzuje nejvýznamnější a nejkontroverznější konspirační teorie o této události. Vysvětluje tyto konspirační teorie a porovnává je s oficiálním prohlášením USA.