

9/11 Then and Now: How It Shapes Us 25 Years On

[Scott Roehm](#) The Human Rights Advocate

Few of our students have any pre-9/11 professional or political consciousness; some weren't yet born. Trump has been in power most of their adult lives. It can be hard for them to wrap their heads around what the world was like on September 10, 2001.

This week marks two-and-a-half decades since al Qaeda attacked the United States, profoundly reorienting the nation's concept of security and laying claim to the collective imagination of the years that followed: the "post-9/11 era." The world we know today – including, in the United States, many of our laws and the bureaucratic design of government institutions, along with their successes, excesses, and pathologies – was forged and defined by that event.

But twenty-five years is a long time – a standard measure used to describe a generation. An [estimated](#) 30% of the U.S. population today was born after Sept. 11, 2001. Before the United States finally withdrew from Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of fighting, it was a common trope to cite that some of the soldiers fighting in that war had not been alive for the attacks that precipitated it. Many more adults today are not old enough to really remember the attacks, or perhaps more to the point, to remember what the world was like before them.

Yet even as the events of 9/11 recede with the passing of time, their imprint remains and continues to shape our current moment in meaningful ways. Five years ago, on the twentieth anniversary of the attacks, the Reiss Center on Law and Security and *Just Security* published a [series](#) of essays examining that impact on policy and law; what we called a "new normal... that might not have been inevitable, but which has profoundly reshaped the current state of national security and rights."

At this quarter-century anniversary, we asked each of the authors convened here – including many from our previous series – to reflect briefly on where they were on 9/11, how it shaped their path, and how that experience continues to inform their work and lives today, particularly in the current moment when many of the cautionary lessons of the post-9/11 era are presented so clearly. The result is a new collection that comprises a set of brief but rich meditations, at the same time personal and analytically grounded. The essays draw from the unique vantage points of their authors to suggest larger lessons about the force of this historical event, and how to take its lessons forward into a future from which it grows increasingly distant.

[Farid Hamidi](#) The Former Attorney General of Afghanistan

I have come to think the deepest error is to speak of that day in the past tense. For Afghanistan, September 11 did not end something; it began something that has not yet found its end.

Many more quotes and information at ... [9/11 Then and Now: How It Shapes Us 25 Years On](#)

Remember - [Marking the 25th Anniversary | National September 11 Memorial & Museum](#)

And [September 11 Attacks: Facts, Background & Impact | HISTORY](#)