

Exercise # 3 – September 11 and the War on Terror

After the attacks on September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush declared a “War on Terror.” He said that the war would not end “until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.”

Ten years later, Lady Eliza Manningham-Buller, former director general of Britain’s Security Service charged with protecting the UK against threats such as terrorism, said that the September 11 attacks were “a crime, not an act of war” and that “I never felt it helpful to refer to a war on terror.”

The distinction between criminal acts and acts of war is a critical one. It has implications for:

- Foreign policy,
- Military action,
- Application of legal principles, both national and international, to such issues as acceptable interrogation techniques and the use of drones to kill suspected terrorists,
- Limitations on civil liberties.

Do you consider that the attacks on September 11, 2001, were criminal acts or acts of war? Why? What’s the difference?

Is it more precise to describe the events of September 11, 2001, as an attack on America or as coordinated attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon? Why?

Which of the following best describes the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks:

- Al-Qaeda operatives,
- international terrorists.
- Islamic terrorists, or
- fundamentalist terrorists?

What makes your choice better than the other alternatives?