On Sept. 11, 2011, America once again mourned the nearly 3,000 lives lost on that tragic day 10 years ago and reflected on how the attacks have changed and influenced life as we know it today. The Albright Reporter asked several Albright experts to share their thoughts on the attacks, 10 years later.

ECONOMY
Farhad Saboori, Ph.D., professor of economics.
Both the immediate and the long-term impacts of the Sept. 11 attacks changed the course of our economic and political landscape for the foreseeable future.

When the attacks occurred, the U.S. was in the midst of a recession that had started, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), in March 2001, worsening an otherwise mild recession, which ended in November 2001. Shortly after the attacks, the stock markets in New York City closed, followed by the closing of the stock markets in Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco. When the markets opened, the major stock indices had lost from 15 to 20 percent of their value, compared to Sept. 10.

Following the attacks and the increased uncertainty in the economy, the unemployment rate increased from 4.2 percent in the first quarter of 2001 to 4.8 percent in the third quarter, followed by a decrease in private domestic investment and a decrease in real GDP by 0.5 percent. The overall short-run costs of the terrorist attacks have been estimated at a median range of $50 billion to $100 billion at the national level, with a low estimate of $35 billion and a high estimate of $109 billion. The empirical estimates of the costs of 9/11 are complicated by the underlying assumptions as well as the monetary and fiscal policy responses that followed the attacks.

After 9/11, the Federal Reserve responded by reducing the federal funds rate from 5.99 percent in the first quarter of 2001 to about 1 percent by the fourth quarter of 2003. In addition, they injected over $100 billion into the banking system to prevent the possibility of a liquidity crisis. On the fiscal policy front, President Bush requested, and Congress passed, a $40 billion government spending bill within a week of the attacks.

After the attacks, crude oil prices temporarily increased, followed by a return to $20.4 per barrel by the third quarter of 2001. On Oct. 7 of that year, the U.S. attacked the Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, which was followed by the invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003. The total direct defense-related costs of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been estimated at $1.313 trillion.

The unprecedented housing bubble, followed by a major financial crisis that contributed to a deep recession, has also left lasting scars on our economy. Americans have been faced with a painful choice between security and an acceptable standard of living.

As economists say, there are no free lunches. The increased spending on national defense, however justified, reduces the resources badly needed for education, infrastructure, and research and development, to increase the competitiveness of American workers in a global economy. The choices we face today are the result of events that are both beyond and within our control.

POLITICS
Mark Oleszek, Ph.D., assistant professor of political science.
The horrifying events of Sept. 11, 2001, have left an indelible impact on American politics and our political system. Ten years later, we see the effects in the augmented power of the executive branch vis-à-vis Congress, the dramatic expansion of our national security establishment, and the financial demands on our nation created by an endless state of war.

During periods of national crisis there is a natural tendency for political power to flow away from the Congress and toward the president, especially when issues of national security are at stake. As Americans rally behind their president in the wake of tragedy, members of Congress often find it politically expedient to delegate power to the president and stay out of the way. But powers once lost can be difficult to regain.

Following 9/11, for instance, Congress quickly equipped the president with tools he requested to initiate military actions against Iraq and Afghanistan—in the process minimizing its own constitutional role to declare war—and rewarded the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to allow for broader and more sustained intrusions into the lives of suspected Americans.

In all likelihood, the president’s newfound power in areas of domestic surveillance, wiretapping and indefinite detention are here to stay. And despite campaign pledges to the contrary, President Obama has been loath to relinquish the expanded wartime powers Congress gave to his predecessor.

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Farhad Saboori, Ph.D.
The collection of directives, initiatives and efforts to "keep Americans safe," or, certainly, "to preserve our way of life," was enormous. In "Top Secret America," a Washington Post investigative series about our national security establishment in the years following 9/11, journalists Dana Priest and William Arkin report that "the top-secret world the government created in response to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, has become so large, so sprawling and so secretive that no one knows how much money it costs, how many people it employs, how many programs exist within it, or exactly how many agencies do the same work."

By their count, "some 1,271 government organizations and 1,931 private companies, contractors and consultants, estimated to do the same work."

In many ways, it was the government's own response to 9/11 that was the greatest terrorist threat to American society. This September, two national surveys of the American Muslim attitudes appeared, one by the Pew Research Center and the other by the Gallup organization, shedding light on the effects of Sept. 11, 10 years later. Ironically, rather than withdrawing from public life or feeling alienated, Muslim Americans are becoming more "visible" in civic affairs. More than 35 percent of American Muslims are actively involved in their local communities. Although 28 percent have encountered verbal and nonverbal acts of discrimination, 37 percent of them regard Americans in general as "unfriendly," and 37 percent report positive support from non-Muslim Americans.

But misconceptions remain a problem. Many Americans, for example, do not know that at least 81 percent of American Muslims categorically reject suicide bombing and the targeting of civilians. Some might be surprised that 82 percent of Muslims enjoy living in America, share American values, and see no conflict between their religious commitments and American society. Only 20 percent of American Muslims advocate social isolation; 80 percent are now full American citizens. And large majorities support economic freedom for workers and full political equality.

Certainly, one of the most important results of 9/11 is that Muslim Americans have come to realize the importance of Muslim cooperation across great internal ethnic, national and racial divides. New progressive voices, like those of Khaled Abou El Fadl at U.C.L.A. Law School, are reexamining the great internal ethnic, national and racial divides. New progressive voices, like those of Khaled Abou El Fadl at U.C.L.A. Law School, are reexamining the theory that three-quarters of the American populace, including 90 percent of Muslims, enjoy living in America, share American values, and see no conflict between their religious commitments and American society. Only 20 percent of American Muslims advocate social isolation; 80 percent are now full American citizens. And large majorities support economic freedom for workers and full political equality.

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