Security and Tradeoffs

Weigh the results and costs of three responses to September 11

SS24.US2.18b "Evaluate the effectiveness of the United States' response to the September 11 attacks, including the war in Afghanistan, creation of the Department of Homeland Security, and passage of the USA PATRIOT Act."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number the three U.S. responses in the passage. Underline evidence of a possible security benefit for each response, and circle evidence of a cost or limitation.

What Did the Responses Achieve?

1. On September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda hijackers struck the United States, killing nearly 3,000 people. In October, the United States invaded Afghanistan after the Taliban government refused to hand over al-Qaeda leaders it sheltered. U.S. and allied forces quickly drove the Taliban from power and disrupted al-Qaeda's Afghan bases. Yet the fighting continued for nearly twenty years, costing lives and vast sums of money. When U.S. troops withdrew in 2021, the Taliban retook control. These events leave both an early military result and a later political result to consider.

2. After the attacks, officials found that agencies had not consistently shared clues about the hijackers. Congress created the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, and it began operating in 2003. The new department brought 22 federal agencies together, including border and transportation security offices. It aimed to coordinate prevention and emergency response. A single department could make cooperation easier, but merging agencies with different missions also created a large organization that faced coordination problems of its own. No attack on the scale of September 11 has occurred on U.S. soil since, but that fact alone cannot prove the department caused the outcome.

3. Congress also passed the USA PATRIOT Act in 2001. It expanded investigators' authority to obtain records and use surveillance tools in terrorism cases, with the aim of uncovering plots before people were harmed. Supporters said faster access to information could help agents connect clues across investigations. Critics warned that broad powers could intrude on privacy, especially when people had limited ways to learn that their information had been collected. In 2015, Congress ended the National Security Agency's bulk collection of domestic phone records under one provision of the law. The change suggests that lawmakers saw a need to adjust how security powers and civil liberties were balanced.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the Taliban's return in 2021 affect your judgment of the war in Afghanistan's early results?

2. How might the Department of Homeland Security address a problem identified after the attacks, and what limitation should you consider?

3. What security benefit did supporters expect from the USA PATRIOT Act, and what cost did critics identify?

4. Which is stronger evidence of a lasting result: the Taliban's return or the absence of another attack on the scale of September 11? Explain one limit of that evidence.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Which of the three responses seems most effective at improving security while limiting long-term costs? Write one paragraph that uses at least two distinct facts from the passage, acknowledges a drawback of your choice, and explains why you judge it more effective than one other response.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.18b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number the three U.S. responses in the passage. Underline evidence of a possible security benefit for each response, and circle evidence of a cost or limitation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the Taliban's return in 2021 affect your judgment of the war in Afghanistan's early results?	**Driving the Taliban from power and disrupting al-Qaeda bases were early gains, but the Taliban's return calls the durability of those gains into question.**
2	How might the Department of Homeland Security address a problem identified after the attacks, and what limitation should you consider?	**Bringing agencies together could improve coordination after failures to share clues. The large department faced coordination problems of its own.**
3	What security benefit did supporters expect from the USA PATRIOT Act, and what cost did critics identify?	**Faster access to records and surveillance could help investigators connect clues and uncover plots. Critics warned that the expanded powers could intrude on privacy.**
4	Which is stronger evidence of a lasting result: the Taliban's return or the absence of another attack on the scale of September 11? Explain one limit of that evidence.	**Either choice is defensible. The Taliban's return directly shows that a political result did not last, but it does not erase the early disruption of al-Qaeda bases. The absence of a comparable attack may suggest improved security, but it cannot prove which policy caused that outcome.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I judge the Department of Homeland Security the most effective because it addressed agencies' failure to share clues by joining 22 agencies under one department. No attack on the scale of September 11 has occurred on U.S. soil since its creation, though that does not prove the department caused this result. Its size can create coordination problems, so its benefits are not automatic. Still, compared with the war in Afghanistan, where the Taliban returned to power in 2021, the department offers an ongoing way to coordinate security efforts.

Accept different judgments when students support them with accurate passage evidence and acknowledge a relevant limitation. Do not accept the absence of a comparable attack as proof that any single policy prevented one.