

Architecture as a Reflection of Prevailing Ideology
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Architecture carries significance beyond that of its physical form. Some structures are imbued with deep symbolism and importance to prevailing ideologies. Religious institutions, for example, are often accompanied by symbolic architecture: the church as a symbol of Christianity, the temple as a symbol of Judaism, and the mosque as a symbol of Islam. Likewise, some architecture reflects an economic school of thought. Most notably in the United States, the World Trade Centers stood as a proud symbol of capitalism. Their attack on September 11, 2001, was an attack not only on the American people but also on the institution of capitalism. More recently, the construction of the One World Trade Center in New York symbolizes the perseverance of the capitalist institution. The World Trade centers of New York, both the pre-September 11 and present day, represent the spiritual and physical embodiment of American capitalism.



Philosophically speaking, Capitalism and Democracy tend to go hand in hand. This widely accepted fact serves as the foundation for the image that US attempted to portray during the 20th and 21st centuries. Furthermore, the building of the World Trade Center became a symbol of the US on a global scale. America was trying to put itself expand its horizons and establish itself as an economic and political leader. Moreover, the pure stature of the buildings was breath taking. When built in 1973, the towers were the tallest buildings in the world, which conveyed a global message regarding American power. Hundreds of thousands of people would come to the World Trade Center in just one day. This landmark became a one-stop center for all sorts of international trade, business, and tourism. Not only did it embody Capitalistic power, it became a universally recognizable spectacle.

What made the World Trade Center so unique – aside from its size – is its architectural simplicity. One point of criticism people had about the towers was that they looked boring or box-like. In fact, this design was completely meant to be “boring”. The towers portrayed a simple, yet utilitarian architecture of American modernism. The stark structures served as a vast contrast to the typical architecture of Wall Street, which employ elements Art Deco architecture. Rather than maintaining simplicity, Federal Hall and the New York Stock Exchange illustrate a visual and ornate architecture – one that is geometric, yet rather complicated in comparison to the World Trade Center. These ornate, old-style buildings represented an architectural style long past, while the World Trade Center signified a new starting point for the US – architecturally and philosophically.

Following the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, capitalism remained an important aspect of American society, even without its trademark buildings. Though the US has had economic ups and downs in the past decade, the capitalist system still represents a vital characteristic of the American economy. As such, a new trade center has been established at the site of the old Twin Towers. Ground Zero, where the towers once stood, now houses a

remarkable memorial to the 9/11 victims. Cubist in nature, the memorial contains a large, square waterfall and wall listing the names of all killed in the attack. Further demonstrating capitalist spirit, the new One World Trade Center, which sits next the memorial, is the tallest building in the Western hemisphere and features sleek, modern steel and glass architecture. Given the weight of the circumstances that gave rise to these new buildings, the 9/11 Memorial and One World Trade Center represent the strong perseverance of the capitalist system.

The World Trade Centers, old and new, fully exemplify a prevailing ideology of American society. From an architectural standpoint, the old Twin Towers made a statement by employing simplified, bold form in an area dominated by older, ornately decorated buildings. Likewise, the new One World Trade Center stands out against the New York skyline with its height and gleaming glass walls. Both the old and the new convey a message of self-determination, creativity, and power, ideas central to the capitalist ideology.

