How did the U.S. government lead its people to war?

War Through Rose-Colored Glasses

In order to build confidence and garner support from the American public, the Bush administration painted a rosy picture of how the Iraq War would unfold. Bush officials presented themselves as competent, efficient and concerned leaders, ready to handle any challenge the war might present.

Among the assurances made by the Bush administration to the public are the following:

Ten Assurances by the Bush Administration

1) The Iraq War won't cost a lot of money
2) We are prepared for every contingency
3) We won't need a lot of troops
4) We will bring peace and freedom to Iraq
5) We will find WMDs
6) We will be welcomed as liberators
7) We have the best plan available for victory
8) The Iraq War will transform the Middle East
9) It will be easy
10) It won't take long

Video: ASSURANCES

Assurance #1: The Iraq War won't cost a lot of money

● RUMSFELD: The Office of Management and Budget estimated it [the cost of war] would be something under $50 billion dollars.

   STEPHANOPOULOS: Outside estimates say up to $300 billion.

RUMSFELD**:** Baloney.

- *Testimony before the House Appropriations Committee, March 27, 2003:*

  WOLFOWITZ**:** There's a lot of money to pay for this. It doesn't have to be U.S. taxpayer money. And it starts with the assets of the Iraqi people... We are dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction and relatively soon.

- The war has exceeded $500 billion in costs as of 2008 – and probably in excess of a trillion dollars when all costs, such as caring for wounded soldiers over time, are included.

  In estimating the cost of the war, Bush officials attempted to assuage people's concerns about the financial burden by focusing on the short-term, direct military costs (the cost of the invasion) – and by not accounting for a long-term occupation of Iraq, the possibility of an insurgency and ongoing violence, as well as significant reconstruction costs.

  The Bush administration further claimed that the reconstruction costs would be mostly offset by Iraqi oil revenues, which has not been the case.

  Furthermore, the lack of support from the international community for the war has placed the primary financial burden on the U.S.

Assurance #2: We are prepared for every contingency

- RUMSFELD: The task of war planners is to plan for every conceivable contingency, and they are doing that, from the most pessimistic to the most optimistic.

- RUMSFELD: You can be sure the United States isn't going to do anything that it's not capable of doing. And if we do something, we'll be capable of doing it.

- There is now a consensus that the U.S. did not adequately plan for the invasion and its aftermath:

  "The Bush administration's failure to plan adequately for the postwar period has been well documented. The Pentagon, for example, ignored extensive State Department studies of how to achieve stability after an invasion, administer a postwar government and rebuild the country. And administration officials have acknowledged the mistake of dismantling the Iraqi army and canceling pensions to its veteran officers -- which many say hindered security, enhanced anti-U.S. feeling and aided what would later become a violent insurgency." - *Washington Post,* 6/12/2005

Assurance #3: We won't need a lot of troops

- On February 25, 2003, General Eric Shinseki, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that "several hundred thousand soldiers" would be needed to secure postwar Iraq.

- Days later, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz countered by saying:

  WOLFOWITZ: Some of the higher end predictions that we have been hearing recently, such as the notion that it will take several hundred thousand U.S. troops to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq are wildly off the mark.

- On November 15, 2006, testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, General John Abizaid, Commander of U.S. Central Command, said:

  "General Shinseki was right that a greater international force contribution, U.S. force contribution, and Iraqi force contribution should have been available immediately after major combat operations."

Assurance #4: We will bring peace and freedom to Iraq

- PRESIDENT BUSH: America's interests in security and America's belief in liberty both lead in the same direction: to a free and peaceful Iraq.

- The idea of invading Iraq to bring "peace and freedom" disregarded the prescient warning of Bush's father President George H.W. Bush, who had written in 1998 of the hazards of an invasion of Iraq in the Persian Gulf War (1991):

  "Trying to eliminate Saddam, extending the ground war into an occupation of Iraq… would have incurred incalculable human and political costs… Had we gone the invasion route, the U.S. could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land. It would have been a dramatically different – and perhaps barren – outcome."

Assurance #5: We will find WMDs

- SENATOR JOHN WARNER: In the event that force is used... is it your judgment that there will be clearly caches of weapons of mass destruction which will dispel any doubt that the United States and such other nations that joined in the use of force did the right thing at the right time?

  TENET: Sir, I think we will find caches of weapons of mass destruction, absolutely.

  RUMSFELD: We know they have weapons of mass destruction. We know they have active programs. There isn't any debate about it. So the idea that if you had an appropriate inspection regime, that they'd come back and say you were wrong, is so far beyond anyone's imagination, that it's not something I think about.

- Here the American public was being assured that the threat from Saddam Hussein was absolutely real and that it had to be dealt with. Yet despite numerous claims by the Bush administration that Saddam Hussein possessed WMDs, no WMDs of any kind were ever found in Iraq.

Assurance #6: We will be welcomed as liberators

- CHENEY: The Middle East expert, Professor Fouad Ajami, predicts that after liberation, the streets in Basra and Baghdad are sure to erupt in joy...

  RUSSERT: Do you think the American people are prepared for a long, costly and bloody battle with significant American casualties?

  VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: I don't think it's likely to unfold that way, Tim, because I really do believe we will be greeted as liberators.

  WOLFOWITZ: These are Arabs, 23 million of the most educated people in the Arab world, who are going to welcome us as liberators.

- Although some Iraqis welcomed U.S. troops, the reception was mixed at best. The notion of a Western army occupying an Arab land summoned up humiliating memories of colonialism, as well as fears regarding underlying U.S. intentions. Before long a growing insurgency took hold, which has led to more than 4 years of violence.

Assurance #7: We have the best plan available for victory

- BUSH: The only thing I can do is assure the loved ones of those who wear our uniform that if we have to go to war, if war is upon us because Saddam Hussein has made that choice, we will have the best equipment available for our troops, the best plan available for victory, and we will respect innocent life in Iraq.

- Army Brigadier General Mark Scheid, chief of the U.S. Logistics War Plans Division prior to the Iraq War – and in charge of all troop and supply deployments worldwide – stated that the plans for the aftermath of the invasion were intentionally curtailed by the Bush administration. *The Hampton Roads Daily Press* reported in September, 2006:

    "Months before the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld forbade military strategists from developing plans for securing a post-war Iraq… In fact, said Brig. Gen. Mark Scheid, Rumsfeld said 'he would fire the next person' who talked about the need for a post-war plan…

    'I remember the secretary of defense saying that he would fire the next person that said that,' Scheid said. 'We would not do planning for Phase 4 operations, which would require all those additional troops that people talk about today.'

    '[Rumsfeld] said we will not do that because the American public will not back us if they think we are going over there for a long war.'"

Assurance #8: The Iraq War will transform the Middle East

- BUSH: Iraq will serve as a catalyst for change, a positive change.

- BUSH: A new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region.

- Prior to the war, many world leaders did not share President Bush's optimistic vision of how a war with Iraq would play out. Amr Mussa, head of the Arab League, said after a two-day meeting of Arab foreign ministers, "We will continue to work to avoid a military confrontation or a military action, because we believe that it will open the **gates of hell** in the Middle East." (September 6, 2002)

    King Abdullah of Jordan, an ally of the United States, said that "**military action against Iraq would really open Pandora's box**" and "destabilize American strategic interests even more in the Middle East." (July 29, 2002)

Assurance #9: It will be easy

- *February 13, 2002, Op-Ed published in the Washington Post*:

    KENNETH ADELMAN (member of the Pentagon advisory board): I believe demolishing Hussein's military power and liberating Iraq would be a cakewalk. Let me give simple, responsible reasons: (1) It was a cakewalk last time; (2) they've become much weaker; (3) we've become much stronger; and (4) now we're playing for keeps.

- ROBERT NOVAK: General Myers, Kenneth Adelman has written that if the United States were to go into Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein, militarily, it would be a "cakewalk." Is that the view here at the Pentagon?

    GENERAL MYERS: When we put our young sons and daughters of this country in harm's way, I don't think you can ever call that a "cakewalk." But what we know is that the situation since Desert Storm and today has changed dramatically, both for U.S. and coalition forces, and for Iraqi forces. The Iraqi armed forces is about 40%, in terms of numbers, of what it was in the Gulf War.

● *July 11, 2002:*

RICHARD PERLE (Pentagon Defense Policy Board chairman): Support for Saddam, including within his military organization, will collapse after the first whiff of gunpowder.

■ It is true that the invasion itself met with limited resistance, and Hussein's military was defeated within weeks. However, the possibility of a protracted and bloody post-invasion conflict, which ultimately ensued, was downplayed or disregarded by Bush officials prior to the war.

Assurance #10: It won't take long

● *November 14, 2002*

RUMSFELD: It is unknowable how long that conflict will last. It could last six days, six weeks. I doubt six months.

● *February 7, 2003:, addressing U.S. troops in Aviano, Italy:*

RUMSFELD: The Gulf War in the 1990s lasted five days on the ground. I can't tell you if the use of force in Iraq today would last five days, or five weeks or five months. But it certainly isn't going to last any longer than that

■ Although the invasion led to the downfall of Hussein's government within weeks, the U.S. military, with 150,000 troops, has been mired in violent conflict in Iraq for over 5 years**.**

It is also worth noting that the United States' involvement in the Iraq War has lasted longer in duration than its participation in WWII.

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