The George W. Bush Presidency

Election of 2000 – Al Gore & Joe Liberman (Dem) vs. George Bush & Dick Cheney (Rep) vs. Pat Buchanan (Reform Party) vs. Ralph Nader (Green Party)

1. George Bush – former Gov of Texas, proposed the following:
   1. Tax cut for wealthiest 1%
   2. Partial privatization of Social Security
   3. Use of government-issued vouchers to pay for private education
2. Al Gore – Clinton’s VP, argued for:
   1. Using the Fed. Gov’t surplus to shore up Social Security
   2. Tax break incentive for college tuition
   3. Expansion of Medicare
3. Pat Buchanan – ran on a very conservative platform
4. Ralph Nader – appealed to many in the left wing of the Democratic party who were disenchanted with Gore’s centrist position
5. Results:
   1. Gore defeated Bush by 537,000 popular votes attaining 267 electoral votes
   2. Bush had won 246 electoral votes
   3. Votes in Florida, who has 25 electoral votes, were disputed – Results showed both candidates in a virtual tie but gave a slight edge to Bush
      1. “Butterfly Ballots” - had apparently misled some Gore voters into voting for Buchanan
      2. “Under votes” - ballots not clearly marked due to antiquated voting machines and inattentive voters, were also an issue
      3. Gore demanded hand recounts in several counties – how to evaluate dimpled, pregnant, and hanging “chads” became a hotly debated issue
      4. Nov 27, 2000 – Florida’s Sec of State Katherine Harris halted the recount process and declared Gov Bush the winner by 537 votes
      5. Gore appealed twice to the Florida Supreme Court resulting in the court ordering the hand recount to continue
      6. Bush went to the Supreme Court which then ordered the recount stopped
      7. Dec 12, 2000 – a deeply divided Supreme Court (5-4 decision), declared that the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment required that all ballots be counted in the same way
         1. Court stated that time did not permit a statewide hand count
   4. Election of 2000 was one of the most remarkable in U.S. history - took 37 days and the Supreme Court to declare a winner
   5. Nader received over 2.5 million (97,419 in Florida), cost Gore New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Florida

Bush’s Early Presidency

1. Economy
   1. Bush Tax Cuts – Bush made good on his campaign pledge to cut taxes for the wealthy, which he claimed would stimulate the economy
      1. Failed to stimulate the economy and also contributed to the rapid decline of the federal budget surplus
   2. Stock Market – in March 2001 the market took a dive, marking the greatest loss in 11 years, followed by another drop in Sept (Dow dropped 234 points)
      1. The market drop, coupled with high unemployment and slowing economic growth led to serious fears of a recession
2. Foreign Policy
   1. The Bush administration preferred unilateral action as opposed to working with other nations
      1. Withdrew from the Kyoto environmental agreements, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and participation in the International Criminal Court
      2. These treaties which sought worldwide participation to end global warming, end atomic testing and proliferation, and establish a world court all ran counter to Bush’s policies
      3. Lack of U.S. participation deeply undermined these international goals and provoked world-wide criticism for its go-it-alone stance

September 11, 2001

1. Four commercial airliners were hijacked by members of Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda terrorist network

a. Two plowed into New York’s World Trade Center destroying the twin towers

b. One plane seriously damaged the Pentagon

c. Another plane (Flight 93) headed for the White

House, crashed in a Pennsylvania field when passengers thwarted the hijackers’ efforts

2. Nearly 3,000 men and women from over eighty countries lost their lives

3. For the 1st time since the War of 1812, foreign agents attacked the continental U.S.

U.S. Response – President Bush declared a “War on Terrorism”

1. Bin Laden had been living among and was supported by Taliban leaders in Afghanistan

a. Bin Laden was linked to terrorist attacks against the USS Cole and U.S. Embassies in Africa in Aug 1998

i. CIA had been active in Afghanistan in the 1990s trying to locate and kill or capture bin Laden

a. Taliban – a fundamentalist Muslim organization led by Mullah Omar, seized control of Afghanistan in 1996

i. With assistance from the U.S. the Taliban overthrew a Soviet-backed regime

ii. Carter & Reagan administrations supported Osama bin Laden in his efforts to drive Russians out of Afghanistan in the 1980s

iii. CIA trained and partially funded many leaders who eventually formed the Taliban

iv. Was especially cruel to Afghan women – banned from education, work, and other civil liberties

2. Sept. 20, 2001 – President Bush issues an ultimatum to the Taliban

a. Demanded that the Taliban arrest Al Qaeda leaders and shut down their training camps

b. Taliban refused citing a lack of evidence linking attacks to bin Laden

3. Bush forged a broad international coalition to hunt down bin Laden and Al Qaeda

a. Great Britain, Canada, Russia, most of Europe and many Muslim countries (Pakistan & Saudi Arabia)

4. Oct 7, 2001 – Operation Enduring Freedom begins

Afghanistan War – Oct 7, 2001-Present

1. Took U.S. and coalition forces from Oct-Dec 2001 to overthrow the Taliban and weaken Al Qaeda’s networks of operation

a. Coalition forces were greatly aided by Afghan Northern Alliance (anti-Taliban forces)

2. International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) – established by UN at end of 2001 to oversee the security and rebuilding of Afghanistan

a. 2003 – NATO takes over command of ISAF

3. War Like None Before – we were fighting an elusive enemy, not nation states with explicit territory and armed forces to be attacked

a. Were fighting scattered cells of determined people who could wreak destruction cheaply and quickly and then virtually disappear

4. Nov 2006 – UN Security Council warns that Afghanistan may become a failed state due to 3 factors:

a. Increased levels of Taliban led attacks

i. Have received additional help from foreign sympathizers, particularly from Pakistan

1. U.S. started launching attacks inside of Pakistan which caused tense relations between the two nations

b. Record high levels of illegal drug production

i. By 2005, Afghanistan had regained its status as the world’s #1 opium producer

ii. Many suspected drug traffickers are high ranking Karzai government officials

iii. 52% of Afghanistan’s GDP ($2.7 billion) comes from the drug trade

iv. Poppy farming is significantly more profitable than wheat, 3.3 million Afghans are involved in producing opium

c. Fragile government with limited control outside of Kabul

5. 2007-2009 – U.S. death tolls increase each year

a. Nov 2009 - Transparency International rates Afghanistan as the world's second most courrupt country behind Somalia

b. Dec 1, 2009 - Pres Obama announces that he will deploy 30,000 additional soldiers over six months to Afghanistan

i. Also sets a withdrawal date for 2014

c. May 2, 2011 - Osama bin Laden is killed in a raid conducted by Navy SEALs in Abbottabad, Pakistan

8. Afghan Government – a conference of Afghan delegates chose Hamid Karzai to lead the country’s temporary government

a. 2004 Presidential Election – first under the new constitution, Hamid Karzai wins easily

b. 2009 Presidential Election – Hamid Karzai with 54% of votes defeats Abdullah Abdullah

i. Widespread claims of fraud

ii. Oct – U.S. pressures Afghan gov’t into

holding a runoff between Abdullah and Karzai, scheduled for Nov 7

iii. Nov 1 – Abdullah withdraws from the race citing that “a transparent election is not possible”

9. Criticism of War

a. Most Americans support the war, but as the war continues to drag on more opposition has built

b. Many countries have complained that the U.S. is trying to create a long-term military presence in Afghanistan in order to counter relations between India, China, and Russia

c. Afghanistan also shares a strategically important border with Iran

d. A series of incidents in 2012 have led many Afghans to turn against U.S. involvement

a. U.S. soldiers were photographed urinating on dead Taliban fighters, U.S. soldiers reportedly burnt several Korans at a military base, and a U.S. soldier murdered 17 Afghans (mostly women and children)

10. Progress in Afghanistan was greatly affected by the Iraq War

The Post 9-11 Foreign Policy

1. Jan 29, 2002, in his State of the Union address, President Bush signaled an intention to carry the fight to other nations that harbor terrorists or develop WMDs (Bush Doctrine)
   1. “An Axis of Evil” – Iran, Iraq, and North Korea – nation’s Bush believed to be pursuing nuclear weapons
2. Israel & Palestine – Israeli resistance to demands for a Palestinian homeland continued to promote conflict in the Middle East post 9-11
   1. Israeli/Palestinian conflicts affect the entire Middle East, thus its escalation added to the enormous problems facing U.S. policy in the region
3. Muslim Extremists – international stability in the future is tied to their behavior
   1. Extremists are trying to unite all followers of Islam in jihad (holy war) against the capitalist West
      1. Most leaders of Muslim nations have condemned extremism and terrorism in the name of Islam
   2. U.S. and its allies have insisted that they are targeting terrorists, not Muslims

Post 9-11 Domestic Issues

1. 9-11 gave a huge boost to the Bush administration
   1. Bush had been criticized for not even being the real president
   2. People joked that Cheney, not Bush, ran the country
   3. European opinion polls indicated that Bush was not taken seriously as a world leader
   4. His approval rating jumped from 52% in early July to 82% by Jan 2002 because of 9-11 – majority of Americans approved of the way he handled the crisis
2. 2002 Midterm Elections – Republicans benefited from Bush’s post 9-11 popularity
3. Economy
   1. Airline industry was significantly effected by 9-11
   2. Unemployment - by midsummer 2002 unemployment was 5.9%, up from 4.6% the previous year
   3. The declining stock market wiped out $7.7 trillion of paper wealth
4. Homeland Security
   1. Security was increased at airports, government buildings, and popular tourist attractions
   2. USA PATRIOT Act (Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) – passed in 2002 with only one dissenting vote
      1. Gave unparalleled powers to the federal government to investigate and detain immigrants suspected of terrorist activity
      2. Was surrounded by a high degree of secrecy, all in the name of national security
      3. Created racial profiling for young Muslim men who became subject to investigations not bound by traditional protections of civil

Liberties

* 1. Executive Order of 2001 – Bush declared that suspected terrorist be tried in military tribunals rather than in civil courts where they would have the full protection of the Constitution
  2. Office of Homeland Security – new cabinet position approved by Congress Nov 2002
     1. Combined 22 different government depts. into a single cabinet level agency
     2. Responsible for the protection of American life and property from terrorist activities and for controlling the nation’s borders
     3. United the U.S. Customs Service, Coast Guard, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Transportation Security Administration but not the CIA and FBI

Iraq War (2nd Gulf War) – March 20, 2003-Dec 15, 2011

Reasons for War Cited by the Bush Administration

1. Eliminate Saddam’s WMDs (nuclear weapons and biological/chemical weapons) – none were found

2. Iraq’s link to Al Qaeda (War on Terror) – no such link existed

3. Bring stability to the Middle East/Regime change; promote democracy – remains to be seen

4. Hidden Reason – Iraq is the world’s 2nd largest oil producing country

Leading up to War

1. The Bush administrations began threatening attacks by the first anniversary of Sept 11th, which provoked heated debate
2. Oct 10, 2002 – House approves Iraq War Resolution 296-133
3. Oct 11 – Senate approves War Resolution 77-23
4. Nov 8, 2002 – Iraq agrees to allow UN weapons inspectors back into the country
   1. No inspections had taken place since 1998 after Operation Desert Fox
   2. Iraq cooperated with many UN demands, but still refused to allow Iraqi scientists and weapons makers to be interviewed
   3. Also hid details of earlier weapons projects
5. Dec 2002 – as weapons inspections continued, the Bush administration made plans for war
6. Inspectors reported finding no evidence of an Iraqi effort to develop WMDs
7. Key members of the UN opposed a 2nd UN resolution calling for Iraq to disarm by March 17th or face military action
   1. France, Germany, Russia, and China believed it was too soon to give up inspections
8. Turkey (largely Muslim nation) elects not to allow the U.S. to launch an invasion from its soil
9. Without UN support military action would only be supported by Great Britain and U.S. (Australia and Poland also helped)
10. March 17, 2003 – on national TV Bush gives Saddam 48 hours to give up power
    1. Hussein offers to leave Iraq and live in exile
       1. Conditions were deemed to be unacceptable by the Bush administration
11. March 19, 2003 – an air strike is ordered targeting Saddam but is unsuccessful
12. March 20, 2003 – war begins (Operation Iraqi Freedom)

Fighting in Iraq

1. Fought in two phases:

a. Brief, conventionally fought war from March –April 2003

i. U.S. forces had taken control of Baghdad by April 9

ii. Casualties: 139 U.S., 33 British

b. U.S. led occupation which was opposed by armed insurgents, April 2003 - present

2. After the military was defeated, Saddam’s supporters turned to guerilla warfare and sabotage

a. Looting also became a major problem

i. U.S. military personnel were unable to police the country due to inadequate numbers

3. Bush administration and military leaders expected to be greeted by cheering Shia Muslims in the South

a. Never happened, most likely due to lack of U.S. support for Shia rebellion of 1991

b. U.S. forces did receive support from Kurds in the North

4. Make-up of Iraq led to Sectarian Violence (Civil War)

a. Sunni Muslims – Muslim sect, Saddam and his regime, central Iraq (Baghdad), supported by most Arab nations

b. Shia Muslims (Shiites) – Muslim sect, majority of Iraqi population, southern part of Iraq, control most of new Iraqi government, supported by Iran

c. Kurds – Ethnic group, controlled much of Northern Iraq, at odds with Sunnis, most support Shiites

5. May 1, 2003 – from the deck of an aircraft carrier President Bush declares major combat over in Iraq

Aftermath of Invasion

1. U.S. interim government was placed in charge of the political and economic reconstruction of Iraq

a. Without Iraqi involvement this make shift government struggled mightily

2. Sunni led guerrilla movements and Shia protests plagued reconstruction efforts

a. Bush Administration was forced to assemble an interim Iraqi government

b. Jan 30, 2005 – Iraqis elected members to a National Assembly to replace the interim government

c. Oct 2005 – Iraqis approved a constitution

d. Dec 2005 – Iraqis elected members to a permanent legislature called the Council of Representatives

e. April 22, 2006 – Nouri al-Maliki is named Prime Minister of Iraq

3. Dec 13, 2003 – Saddam is captured

a. Nov 5, 2006 – Saddam is sentenced to death by an Iraqi court

b. Dec 30, 2006 – Saddam is hanged

4. Abu Graib Prison Scandal – April 2004 photographs surface of prisoner abuse at the U.S. run prison

a. Public opinion polls show that a majority of Iraqis oppose U.S. occupation

b. Polls in U.S. show waning support for the war and low approval ratings for President Bush’s handling of the war

5. Spain pulls troops out in April 2004; Norway, Thailand, Bulgaria, and Ukraine do the same in 2005 followed by Japan in 2006

a. Great Britain has also pulled out many of its troops and officially ended its military missions in Iraq in April of 2009

b. Europe and Middle Eastern countries were overwhelmingly against the war

i. Many in the Middle East saw the war as a new brand of anti-Arab and anti-Islamic Imperialism

Back Home

1. 2006 Midterm Elections – Democrats take control of Congress by capitalizing on voter disdain with the Iraq War

a. Nancy Pelosi becomes the first female Speaker of the House

2. Donald Rumsfeld – Sec of Defense, resigns after receiving extensive criticism for his handling of the war

a. Robert Gates – named new Sec of Defense

3. Dec 2006 – Iraq Study Group reports that the situation in Iraq was “grave and deteriorating”

a. Jan 10, 2007 – Bush rejects most suggestions made by the group and elects to implement the “Surge” strategy

b. Surge – sent an additional 30,000 troops to put an end to sectarian violence between Shia militias and Sunni insurgents

i. Brought troop levels to 169,000

c. Bush also acknowledged that Iraq would require a U.S. troop presence long after his presidency

4. As a result of the surge attacks dropped

5. Aug 31, 2010 - U.S. combat operations in Iraq formally ended

a. Fewer than 50,000 U.S. troops were to remain in Iraq through 2011

6. Dec 15, 2011- U.S. military announces that its mission in Iraq is over

Costs of the Iraq War

1. 2007 was the deadliest year of the war – 894 U.S. soldiers were killed

2. 2.3 million Iraqis had fled the country and another 2.3 million had been displaced from their homes within Iraq

3. Total cost of the war is estimated to be between $800 billion and $1 trillion

4. 33, 184 Americans wounded; 4,486 Americans killed