
DONALD TRUMP'S OPINION OF THE IRAQ WAR AS IT BEGAN WAS JUST LIKE THE AVERAGE AMERICAN'S

-

21.09.2016

The Washington Post, 20 September 2016

President George W. Bush flashes a "thumbs-up" after declaring the end of major combat in Iraq as he speaks aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln off the California coast in 2003. (AP)

George W. Bush's administration did a good job convincing many Americans of the case to invade Iraq. As it turned out, the invasion was neither justified under the evidence presented to the world nor simple, and support for the effort quickly deteriorated. At the outset, the war was viewed positively, as was Bush. By the end of 2004, neither was.

That arc mirrors the views of Donald Trump.

Trump insists that he opposed the war from the outset, but the only available evidence is that he backed it. This point has been made any number of times before, but it's important to point out that it makes sense. A lot of Americans backed the war at the outset and slowly grew skeptical of the effort — precisely the path that Trump seems to have taken.

Using data from Washington Post-ABC News polling in 2003 and 2004, we charted polling on the subject as the war unfolded and overlapped it with The Washington Post's timeline of what Trump said about his support and when.

Howard Stern, Sept. 11, 2002: Support. "Yeah, I guess so," Trump said when asked if he supported an invasion of Iraq. "You know, I wish the first time it was done correctly." This is the first comment Trump seems to have made on the subject.

Fox News, March 21, 2003: Support. The day after the war began, Trump praised the effort. "It looks like a tremendous success from a military standpoint," he told Fox News's Neil Cavuto.

Post, March 24, 2003: Oppose. But at an Oscars party a few days later, Trump's mood had soured. "The war's a mess," he said, lamenting how the day had gone.

The Post reported that there was another aspect to Trump's frustration. Trump "pronounce[d] on the war and the stock market," our report read. The Oscars were on March 23; on March 24, the Dow dropped 307 points. Why? Because the war was a mess. Or, as CNN Money reported, quoting an investment banker, "People are realizing that the war is going to be longer and more drawn out than anticipated."

MSNBC, Sept. 11, 2003: Unclear, leaning negative. Trump's position on the war was a bit murky toward the end of 2003, well after the May 1 "Mission Accomplished" announcement. "It wasn't a mistake to fight terrorism and fight it hard," he said on MSNBC, "and I guess maybe if I had to do it, I would have fought terrorism but not necessarily Iraq."

In other words, Trump didn't oppose the war from the outset. Like many Americans, he backed it, gradually losing confidence in the effort. He also supported a quick withdrawal of U.S. forces, until he didn't. The only reason that Trump now insists that his opinion was different is because he wants specifically to demonstrate that his judgment was better than everyone else's, including Hillary Clinton's.

It wasn't. By all available evidence, it was the same.

Kaynak/Source: