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O Globo, Brazil

## The 'Greatest Humiliation Ever' for Sitting American Leader

*"The report was a lesson in realpolitik for a group of amateurs calling themselves neoconservatives, who kidnapped the foreign policy of the United States ... and should be of value to Hugo Chavez and others."*

By William Waack\*



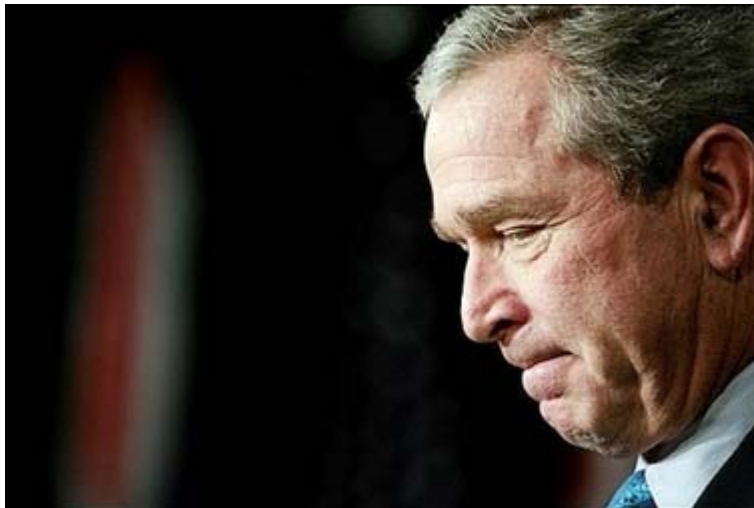
Translated By Brandi Miller

December 7, 2006





Brazil - O Globo - Original Article (Portuguese)

The recommendations made to President Bush by the Iraq Study Group (ISG is the acronym in English) comprise the greatest humiliation ever suffered by a seated American leader. They expose the delusion of the Bush Doctrine and the unilateralism of American decision-making that led to the defeat in Iraq. And, most of all,



President George W. Bush: Is this the greatest humiliation ever suffered by an American leader.

—C-SPAN VIDEO NEWS: Bush 'accepts' the report from the Iraq Study Group, Dec. 6, 00:03:14 

—BBC NEWS VIDEO: President Bush meets with Congressional leaders to mull over the report from the Iraq Study Group, Dec. 7, 00:01:40 



[LATEST NEWS PHOTOS: Iraq Study Group].

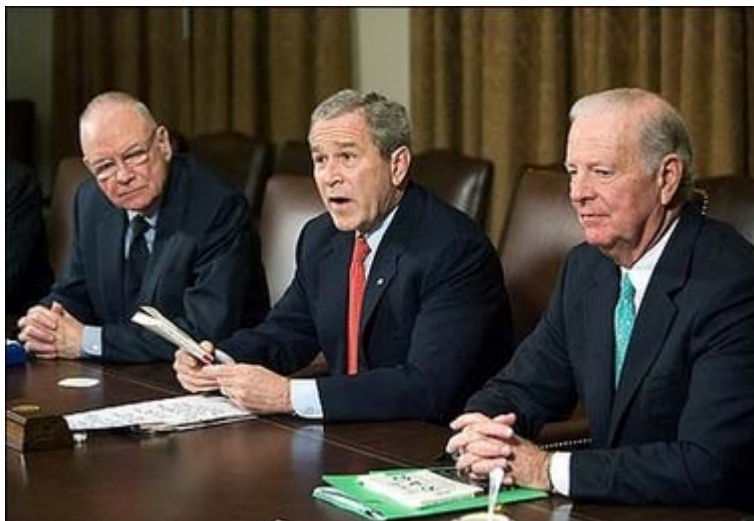
the report was a lesson in realpolitik for a group of amateurs called neoconservatives, who kidnapped the foreign policy of the United States.

Nothing much new was proposed by the bipartisan group, presided over by ex-Secretary of State James Baker III and comprising veteran heavyweights of politics and past American administrations. New, or better yet, perhaps excessively hopeful, its very existence presumes that a president who is ignorant about foreign policy, stubborn and limited in his ability to reason, and with an ideological vision of international conflicts, can backtrack and accept the Group's recommendations (there are 79 of them).

The key conclusions are sensible and stable and can be summarized briefly as follows, since simple solutions are generally the most efficient. Here we go: a) a timetable for the withdrawal of American fighting forces; b) strengthening the decision-making and capacity to take action of the Iraqi government; c) reaching some kind of understanding with Iraq's key neighbors, notably Iran and Syria; d) a comprehensive effort to address the Palestinian question, as a way to attract other Arab countries in help stabilize Iraq.


—C-SPAN VIDEO NEWS: News Conference U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Germany's foreign minister: Condi admits to some 'deep thinking' on the Iraq Crisis, cites Middle East 'freedom deficit,' Dec. 10:34

The report from the Iraq Study Group: Reaction to it shows it is one of the most momentous such reports ever put together.



Lee Hamilton, George Bush and James Baker: Will Bush listen?

The main problem is that these recommendations, as numerous Washington critics have already pointed out, seem more appropriate for the Middle East as it existed 15 years ago – more or less at the end of the first Gulf War. Two important factors have changed since then. The first is the growth of ideological radicalism – and not only Islamic radicalism. The second is the loss of American credibility – and its defeat in confronting its adversaries.

Beyond this, two facts of enormous relevance have barely begun to show their consequences, and both were provoked by the invasion in 2003. First, the Americans, observes the *Financial Times*, in one strike destroyed the millennium-old order in Mesopotamia: that of supremacy of Sunnis over Shiites (the ethnic cleansing to which the Iraqis are so dedicated, at a cost of 5,000 deaths per month, is a consequence this). And the second: Iran was elevated to being the main power in the region, with direct influence over what happens from Herat in Afghanistan, to Baghdad, and including all of southern Iraq. Never in his wildest dreams did the late Ayatollah Khomeini , the leader of Iran's Islamic revolution, contemplate such an expansion of Iranian influence.

The Iraq Study Group observes that the situation in Iraq cannot be separated from another far older dispute in the region, the Arab-Israeli conflict. James Baker III goes as far as to say that Washington will never attract other Arab states to help stabilize Iraq (he says this - almost in passing) if it isn't capable of exercising some influence over Israel - something that Bush the Father (to whom Baker was a principle advisor and counselor) knew how to do.

But the recent war in the South of Lebanon against Hezbollah (who was supported by Syria and Iran) was a political failure and a military fiasco - provoked by Israel's new Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, a man who the Americans sincerely doubt can properly evaluate events. On the Palestinian side, without going into an explanation of its deepest causes, there is administrative chaos, a political split and an internal war. Under these circumstances, where would it be possible to move forward? And with whom?


For those that appreciate psychoanalyzing people involved in historic decision-making, the destructive conclusion of the Baker group – that the United States is losing the war in Iraq - brings up the relationship between Bush the father and Bush



Senator Hillary Clinton reads the report: A cautionary tale for a future Commander-in-Chief?

the son. The father ordered a stop to the first Gulf War in March of '91 because he feared the chaos that would accompany the fall of Saddam from power and the resulting Shiite uprising in the South of Iraq. Bush the son suggested going to the field to settle the account that his father had left open. It's as if Uncle Baker has come to show the boy the consequences of his irresponsibility.

----- But there is a universal lesson in the world presented by the Iraq Study Group. Facts eventually impose themselves on ideological visions of reality and, in general, show the incalculable cost in human life of forgetting this. Nearly always, the consequences of actions taken out of ideological bias are contrary to those intended by the responsible party, as is the case in Iraq. This should be of value for Bush, just as it is for [Venezuelan President] Chávez or [Brazilian Prime Minister] Lula.

Leaders that lull themselves to sleep tend to respect and recognize reality only when it's too late. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., the greatest living American historian, opens his recent book on war and the American presidency with a quote from Hegel : "some politician never learn anything useful from history."

## Portuguese Version Below

### **Derrotado no Iraque, Bush não aprendeu com a história**

As recomendações que o grupo de estudos sobre o Iraque (ISG, na sigla em inglês) fez ao presidente Bush são a maior humilhação jamais sofrida por um governante americano no poder. Foi a pá de cal na doutrina Bush, no unilateralismo das principais decisões americanas que levaram à derrota no Iraque e, principalmente, uma aula de realpolitik ao bando de amadores neoconservadores que seqüestraram a política externa dos Estados Unidos.

Nada foi proposto de muito novo pelo grupo bi-partidário, presidido por um ex-secretário de Estado, James Baker III, e integrado por veteranos peso-pesados da política e de administrações americanas. Novo, ou melhor, talvez excessivamente esperançoso, é supor que um presidente ignorante sobre política externa, teimoso e limitado em seus raciocínios, e com uma visão ideologizada dos conflitos internacionais possa voltar atrás e aceitar as recomendações (e elas são 79).

As principais são sensatas e equilibradas, e podem ser resumidas em poucos princípios -soluções simples costumam ser, de fato, as mais eficientes. Vamos lá: a) escalonamento da retirada das tropas de combate americanas; b) fortalecimento das decisões e capacidade de ação do governo iraquiano; c) entendimentos de algum tipo com os principais vizinhos, notavelmente Irã e Síria; d) esforço abrangente na questão palestina, como forma de atrair os outros países árabes para ajudar a estabilizar o Iraque.

O problema principal é que essas recomendações, conforme já assinalaram vários críticos em Washington, parecem mais adequadas ao Oriente Médio de 15 anos atrás -mais ou menos ao final da primeira guerra do Golfo. Dois fatores importantíssimos mudaram de lá para cá. O primeiro foi o crescimento do radicalismo ideológico, não só islâmico. O segundo foi a perda de credibilidade dos Estados Unidos, não só frente a seus adversários.

Além disso, dois fatos de enorme relevância apenas começam a mostrar suas conseqüências, ambos provocados pela invasão de 2003. Os americanos, observa o jornal Financial Times, subverteram de um golpe uma ordem milenar na Mesopotâmia: a da supremacia sunita sobre os xiitas (a limpeza étnica à qual estão dedicados os iraquianos, ao preço de 5 mil mortos por mês, é reflexo disso). E o Irã foi projetado como a principal potência da região, com peso direto no que acontece de Herat, no Afeganistão, até Bagdá, fora todo o sul do Iraque. Nem em suas previsões mais arrojadas o falecido Ayatollah Khomeini, o líder da revolução islâmica iraniana, tinha calculado uma tal extensão da influência iraniana.

O grupo de estudos do Iraque observa com muita propriedade que a situação no Iraque não pode ser desvinculada de outro conflito mais antigo na região, o árabe-israelense. James Baker III vai ao ponto de dizer que Washington jamais atrairá outros países árabes (sunitas, diga-se de passagem) para estabilizar

o Iraque se não for capaz, de alguma maneira, de exercer pressão sobre Israel -coisa, aliás, que soube fazer Bush pai, de quem Baker foi um dos principais assessores e conselheiros.

Mas a recente guerra no Sul do Líbano contra o Hezbollah (apoiado por Síria e Irã) foi um fracasso político e um relativo fiasco militar provocados pelo novo primeiro ministro Ehud Olmert, sobre quem os americanos tem sinceras dúvidas quanto à capacidade de avaliação dos acontecimentos. No lado palestino, sem querer discutir aqui as causas mais profundas, impera o caos administrativo, a cisão política e a guerra interna. Nessas circunstâncias, seria possível avançar onde, e com quem?

Para quem aprecia o lado psicológico dos indivíduos envolvidos em decisões históricas, a destruidora conclusão do grupo Baker -os Estados Unidos estão perdendo a guerra no Iraque- traz de volta a relação pai e filho entre os Bush. O pai mandou parar a guerra, em março de 91, pois temia o caos com a derrubada do poder de Saddam e uma sublevação xiita no Sul do Iraque. Bush filho sugeriu ter ido a campo para liquidar a fatura que o pai deixara em aberto. É como se o tio Baker tivesse vindo mostrar ao menino as conseqüências da irresponsabilidade.

Mas há uma lição universal no trabalho apresentado pelo grupo de estudos sobre o Iraque. Os fatos se impõem às visões ideologizadas da realidade e, em geral, a um preço incalculável em vidas humanas, como é o caso do Iraque. Quase sempre as conseqüências de ações determinadas pelo viés ideológico são as contrárias àquelas pretendidas pelos seus responsáveis, como é o caso do Iraque. É algo que vale para Bush, como para vale para Chávez ou Lula.

É que governantes acalentados por si mesmos tendem a acatar e reconhecer realidades apenas quando é muito tarde. Arthur Schlesinger Jr, o grande historiador americano da atualidade, abre seu recente livro sobre guerras e as presidências americanas com uma citação de Hegel: "jamais algum político aprendeu algo de útil da História".



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