

# Omissions In the Iraq Study Group Report

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In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

Noted historian Eric Foner in a December 7 article on OpEd News.com calls George Bush “the worst president in US history....(who) in his first six years in office....managed to combine the lapses of leadership, misguided policies and abuse of power of his failed predecessors.” Equally noted historian Gabriel Kolko agrees, and along with his other comments, calls the Bush administration “the worst set of incompetents ever to hold power in Washington.” And referring specifically to the war in Iraq, Kolko colorfully describes what former Reagan administration National Security Agency (NSA) chief General William Odom calls “....the worst strategic mistake in the history of the United States” by saying the Bush administration “shocked and awed....itself.” Hard to say it better than that.

Enter James Baker and the Iraq Study Group (ISG) that reported its findings publicly on December 6 after most of it was leaked well in advance making its release and full-court corporate media press hyping and griping anti-climactic as well as disappointing and disturbing. The ISG was formed in March with at least four crucial aims:

—to avoid a perceived inevitable political and fiscal train wreck caused by the disastrous Bush administration policy over the past six years.

— to buy time for the failed and discredited Bush administration attempting to save it along with the family’s name and reputation.

— to devise a scheme to assure US dominance in the Middle East, fast slipping away, is restored and maintained going forward so this country doesn’t lose control over what a State Department spokesperson in 1945 called a “stupendous source of strategic power and one of the greatest material prizes in world history -(the region’s oil).”

— to be a (thinly-veiled) attempt to assuage public anger over a war gone sour, that’s illegal, can’t be won, is taking a terrible toll, and never should have been waged.

The ISG did it by proposing 79 recommendations supposedly comprising a change of course strategy that, in fact, amounts to little more than moving the existing chess pieces around the Iraq board, ending up almost where we are now – in a hopeless unresolvable quagmire approaching an apocalypse with no possibility of winning an unwinnable war and no high-level policy-makers thinking we can save for a president mired in a state of denial.

He’s out of touch with reality, and according to Capitol Hill Blue editor Doug Thompson from insider reports he’s getting calling the president “a dangerous cornered animal” he writes: Bush is a man “living on the edge” growing “more sullen and moody with each passing day....his paranoia....increasing to manic levels as he launches into tirades about traitors in his own party, in the press and among his allies (and) feels betrayed by....James Baker

(whose ISG report he feels humiliated his administration).” The president, hasn’t a clue that Jim Baker didn’t do this. George Bush did a very thorough job of it himself.

#### What the ISG Should Have Addressed but Didn’t

That said and well reported, what’s most striking about the ISG report isn’t what it says but what it leaves out. Beginning in 1991, the US conducted an unending war of aggression in two phases, with a dozen years of punishing and unjustifiable sanctions sandwiched between them, against a country posing no threat to us or its neighbors following its long and costly war in the 1980s with Iran (that the US urged Saddam to wage and supported him throughout) from which it needed financial help to recover but hadn’t gotten enough to make a significant difference. It began after Saddam misread US intentions regarding his troubled relations with Kuwait, allowing himself to be deceived by the first Bush administration into believing we had no interest in how he chose to settle his justifiable dispute which Washington had a hand in creating.

With US urging, Kuwait demanded repayment of \$14 billion in outstanding loans incurred to help finance Saddam’s war with Iran, it also helped keep oil prices low when Iraq needed them higher to oblige, and it was slant drilling into Iraqi territory and provokingly refusing to negotiate a reasonable settlement to all disputes. Finally, Iraq took matters into its own hands to do by invasion what it couldn’t achieve through months of failed diplomacy but only with de facto US approval it thought it got that proved not to be.

Saddam fell into the trap, and the rest is history. He’s now still in the dock after one conviction, was sentenced to be hanged by the US-administered kangaroo court after the first of his trials, his country is occupied and in ruins, and his people are living in a state of out-of-control violence and desperation because of an illegal and brutal occupation that must end unconditionally for them to have any hope for a normal life again.

The ISG report ignores this history and the reasons we went to war with Iraq in the first place. It began with Saddam’s misguided invasion of Kuwait in August, 1990 with the US then claiming it would liberate the country forcibly even though he was willing to negotiate a settlement and pull out his forces. But once the trap was baited with Saddam in it, there was no turning back from a war the US wanted. Events were unstoppable which was clear from GHW Bush’s belligerent language saying “(Saddam’s) Naked aggression will not stand” and refusing all his overtures to negotiate and his willingness to remove his occupying forces wanting only reasonable redress.

GWH Bush got the war he wanted, but the US plan wasn’t to liberate Kuwait. It was to remove or fatally weaken a leader we couldn’t dominate and liberate his nation’s oil and sovereignty from his control to ours. It was also a way to accomplish what GHW Bush said at war’s end six weeks after it began on January 17, 1991: “It’s a proud day for America – and, by God, we’ve kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all,” but he failed to explain what he meant was this now gave the US license to attack and invade another country any time henceforth it could convince the public a threat existed to justify it. Given the power and complicity of the corporate-controlled media, that hasn’t been a problem since.

So faced with the syndrome’s resurgence from the disaster today in Iraq, the ISG is waging a frontal attack to contain it deceiving the public to believe a new course is at hand hoping to assuage its anger so essentially the same failed policy can continue unabated. It’s also to buy enough time for George Bush to get through the next two years, hold together his failed

administration slowly coming apart for lack of public support, and keep the ship of state from being wrecked on the shoals of the administration's ineptness and arrogance extreme enough for a growing number of former adherents to walk away not wanting the taint of it to tarnish them any more than it already has.

It doesn't matter what was proposed on December 6 or that there's no chance it can work any better than current policy. That's for the next administration in 2009 to worry about. What does matter is to convince the public it's a new course, even though it's only smoke and mirrors, and one sensible enough to work that will end the US occupation and involvement in the country but at an unspecified time left unstated because there is none or any intention to leave the country or give up control of its oil treasure. Just like in the run-up to the March, 2003 attack and invasion, the public again has been had, and it remains to be seen how long it will take for it to catch on and continue opposing an illegal war of aggression that never should have been waged in the first place.

#### Other Omissions in the ISG Report

Start with its members and the interests they represent. Overall it's an assemblage of high-level elitists from past government service working with their counterparts in the military and ideologically-driven right wing think tank experts brought together to find a way to assure the US imperial agenda stays on track meaning despite what its report said, the US is in Iraq to stay as long as there's enough oil in the region to make it worthwhile as that's why we came in the first place along with neutering Saddam to remove Israel's main obstacle to its regional hegemony.

Jim Baker led the group along with his co-chair and leading figure of the 9/11 commission whitewash, former Democrat congressman Lee Hamilton, who's another long-standing loyal servant of empire and serial abuser of the public trust. They and the others on the Commission share another dubious attribute. Like George Bush and his administration co-conspirators, these figures, too, are war criminals along with their other abuses of the public trust that should have put them in the dock of justice and made them be held to account along with George Bush, Dick Cheney and their band of neocon rogues. They never will be in a nation ruled by victor's justice meaning none at all for the law-breakers and a whole lot of injustice for its victims.

Jim Baker's association with crime and scandal is long-standing, but he's always emerged unscathed, his reputation, in fact, enhanced, with each new episode of lawlessness he's played a central role in while navigating safely through each of them. He's done it almost without breaking a sweat in his role as a man at the center of power since the inception of the Reagan administration in 1980. Outside the Bush family, no one is closer or more important to the president's father and former president than Baker. And no one has more influence with him or with other major players in the nation's power establishment, at least on the dominant Republican side. It's why, along with others of his status, he's able to get away with murder and most anything else.

From 1985 - 1988, he was Ronald Reagan's Secretary of the Treasury after serving as the president's influential White House Chief of Staff from inception (as part of the Baker, Ed Meese, Michael Deaver power troika) till he took over the treasury post. While there, he, more than anyone else (but with a lot of co-conspiratorial help), bore responsibility for the grand theft of over \$100 billion in the notorious Savings and Loan scandal that allowed the looting of deregulated banks to take place throughout the country, especially in his home

state of Texas where anything goes as long as there's a buck in it for the power elite. He then served as GHW Bush's Secretary of State from 1989 – 1992 playing a major role in crafting administration policy leading to the Gulf war and the unjustifiable sanctions of aggression at its conclusion.

Baker formed his own think tank in 1993 after leaving the Bush administration, the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy in Houston, where the former president happens to live when he's not at his summer home in Maine. It supports "oil and petrodollar conquest" policies, played a major role in post 9/11 policy and the fraudulent "war on terror" making it possible, and is also a prominent attorney connected with the notorious Carlyle Group that's profited enormously from all things connected to the defense establishment and uses the services of GHW Bush in the role of "senior consultant" and master rainmaker/fixer-arranger at a very high price for his services.

Baker also engineered the theft of the 2000 presidential election for the younger Bush by assuring he got the necessary 25 Florida electoral votes and not Al Gore who won them and the presidency he never got because George Bush was chosen for the role regardless of the will of the electorate. Five complicit US Supreme Court justices went along with the scheme to seal the deal and in so doing abrogated their constitutional duty to uphold the law of the land. One of them was commission member Sandra Day O'Connor, now rewarded for her participation in the infamous judicial coup d'état giving her an encore performance as legal advisor and expert law twister/subverter for the interests of wealth and power she swears allegiance to like all the other members of the "Gang of Ten" co-conspirators.

Baker is their leader and is presented as an respected diplomat and elder statesman sent to rescue the ship of state and Bush administration to keep it afloat and him in the White House at least for another two years. What he is, in fact, is a master criminal/manipulator/schemer, a dangerous and ruthless power broker deserving no public trust who should be made to answer for his malfeasance according to the law he doesn't respect or acknowledge unless he can twist it to serve his interests or those of his clients.

More Omissions – Trashing International Law Including the UN Charter and US Constitution to Wage An Illegal War of Aggression

How could a nation born as a great democratic experiment rebelling against the divine right of monarchs become instead now one worshipping the divine right of capital and capable of being even more repressive. Ben Franklin warned about this early on saying "(The US Constitution) is likely to be administered for a course of years and then end in despotism....when the people shall become so corrupted as to need (or not be vigilant enough to prevent) despotic government, being incapable of any other."

Much earlier, Roman historian Tacitus explained what then happens: "They (pillage) the world. When the land has nothing left for men who ravage everything, they scour the sea. They....are greedy....they crave glory....They covet wealth....They plunder, they butcher, they ravish, and call it....'empire.' They make a desert and call it peace." Today they pillage, destroy and enslave in serfdom and call it democracy. They believe it's their right, divine or otherwise, and their cause is just. They lead this nation, and the rest of the world trembles and suffers dearly as long as they rule. The Iraq conflict is just their latest excursion to satisfy their insatiable lust for more wealth, power and glory.

The initial Bush-led "shock and awe" attack against that afflicted country didn't start on

March 18, 2003. It began in small, incremental steps continuing the intermittent harassing mostly below-the-radar strikes that went on throughout the 1990s and picked up again after 9/11 as violence in the so-called No-Fly Zone increased and the Washington anti-Saddam demonization rhetoric was rolled out prepping the public for the Iraq war the Bush administration wanted as soon as it came to town.

It only reached full fury in the opening days of the war that began in mid-March, 2003. It's now gone on longer than WW II with no resolution in sight, despite all the lofty disingenuous talk and one over-hyped commission practicing the Sun Tzu Art of War deception on the US public in its cooked up reworked version of the same failed policy of aggressive war and permanent occupation. It has no chance to end the resistance to it unless or until all our forces are unconditionally withdrawn, something this country won't ever agree to but, in the end, will be forced to do just like it had to acknowledge defeat and leave Southeast Asia in 1975. History has a way of repeating for those failing to learn its lessons. This time the price being paid looks a lot stiffer and more painful than the last misadventure, but the full amount won't be known until the current exercise in futility finally ends.

Unstated in any part of the ISG report or in any Washington or mainstream commentary on Iraq policy since the confrontation with Saddam began in January, 1991, is that the US planned and carried out a war of illegal aggression now near completing its 16th year. Early on, this country got some UN-cover by dint of its high-pressure to shape Security Council policy to fit its own. That process, however, broke down in the run-up to the current conflict beginning in March, 2003 when the US pretext for war was so outrageous, enough countries with clout and Security Council veto power opposed us forcing Washington to go it alone with an embarrassing "coalition of the willing." Those countries in it became shameless co-conspirators by agreeing to join in partnership with the US defiantly flaunting international laws and norms as participants in this exercise of lawlessness.

You won't find any of that hinted at in the ISG report. It's not mentioned that this country began by violating Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution that gives the power to declare war solely to the Congress, although it hasn't exercised it since it declared war against the Axis powers in WW II. It also ignores our violating what the Nuremberg Tribunal trying Nazi war criminals called the "supreme international crime" stating: "To initiate a war of aggression....is not only an international crime, it is the supreme crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole." And it doesn't mention this country violated the UN Charter that's international law this country is bound by. It allows a nation the right to use force in its self-defense only under two conditions: when authorized to do it by the Security Council or under Article 51 that permits the "right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member....until the Security council has taken measures to maintain international peace and security."

By attacking Iraq without provocation and with no Security Council authorization for it prior to March, 2003, the US violated this sacred covenant it's a signatory to. It also violated the US Constitution that says...."all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land." The Bush administration flaunts that law, but the ISG is unperturbed, allows this elephant in our face to go unmentioned, by its silence supports its continuance, and is unwilling to act responsibly to assure going forward this country abides by all laws and standards as a first prerequisite to resolving the conflict in Iraq and most important to preventing future ones.



It can't do it, because if it does it would then have to acknowledge this country attacked, invaded and now occupies Iraq in violation of international laws and norms, must now end its illegal occupation, and those responsible must be held to account for what they've done in the world and national bodies established to deal with these type crimes of war and against humanity. It would also have to acknowledge that all the commission members have their own closets filled with disturbing skeletons including, of course, the former High Court justice exposed above whose judicial act of infamy allowed this holocaust to happen and never spoke out publicly against it indicating she finds mass slaughter and destruction quite acceptable by her legal and moral standards – the same rogue standards all commission members and those in the Bush administration endorse so they act co-conspiratorially to cover for each other.

The ISG also ignored other international laws this country is legally bound to obey but didn't and won't ever under a Bush administration that mocks them. Nonetheless, the US can't hide its use of banned chemical and poisonous depleted uranium weapons outlawed by the 1925 Geneva Convention Gas Protocol and various succeeding Geneva Conventions banning the use of chemical and biological weapons in any form for any reason in war. In addition, under various UN Conventions and Covenants that are binding international law for its signatories, the use of any weapons that cause harm after the battle including away from the battlefield, harm the environment, or kill, wound or cause harm inhumanely are illegal and banned.

In the Gulf war and thereafter, the US military routinely used illegal weapons including depleted uranium munitions for 16 years in Iraq that spread deadly toxic irremediable radiation over a vast area of the country. These weapons are poisonous under international law and violate all the above conditions. The Pentagon also willfully violated international statutes by using an array of banned and questionable weapons with no restraint including against non-military civilian targets as a tactical strategy, a practice prohibited by these codes of law.

By its silence, the ISG tacitly endorses these practices as well as the administration's use of torture outlawed by various binding international statutes including the significant 1984 UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) that includes rape and the kinds of sexual abuse routinely used in US-administered prisons in Iraq as part of the interrogation, dehumanizing and terror-inducing social control process authorized by the December 18 departing Secretary of Defense and unindicted war criminal Donald Rumsfeld.

Jim Baker and the other commission members also are comfortable with the way the US military treats the thousands of prisoners it holds even though they're denied all rights guaranteed them under the Third Geneva Convention of 1949 (GCIII) that provides for humane treatment including an array of services like enough proper food and medical care and prohibits the kinds of abusive practices the US routinely engages in. The ISG report also ignores any change of policy regarding the rights of civilians guaranteed under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 (GCIV) that covers a range of protections routinely denied them as another part of the Bush administration's flaunting of all international laws that prohibit whatever practices it wishes to engage in, law or no law. No problem for Jim Baker and his "Gang of Ten" including the former High Court justice member who understands the law and was sworn to uphold it while on the bench, domestic and international that's binding US law under the Constitution.

## Omissions About the Human Cost in Iraq

The few ISG findings deserving mention and discussion have largely been ignored in the corporate-controlled media because doing so would be embarrassing to the Bush administration trying to cover them up as further evidence of its failure in Iraq that can only be characterized as criminal, disastrous and hopeless short of a full and unconditional US withdrawal not in the cards.

One of them at the end of the long report mentions a “significant underreporting of the violence in Iraq.” It’s part of the cover-up from the White House and Department of Defense the commission says acts “as a filter to keep events out of reports and databases (to distort) events on the ground.” It cites an example that last July the Pentagon report of 93 attacks one day was distorted to hide the reality that “a careful review of the reports....brought to light 1,100 acts of violence (on that day, or a slight 11-fold greater amount of it).”

Noting that is fine as far as it goes, but it’s not near enough as the ISG’s mini-revelation hides the greater truth about the US-inflicted holocaust against the Iraqi people that began in January, 1991, continues unabated and won’t end until the occupation does. That’s the key “reality” the ISG report suppresses as does the corporate-controlled media including parts buried deep in it they’re silent on.

For 16 years, the US created a living hell in Iraq. It willfully and illegally destroyed essential infrastructure like power generating stations and clean water and sanitation facilities vital to health, welfare and public safety. It wantonly targeted and slaughtered many thousands of civilians. It unjustifiably imposed a dozen years of punishing economic sanctions causing the deaths of as many as 1.5 million innocent Iraqis two UN heads of humanitarian relief resigned in protest over, being unwilling to participate in a US-imposed policy one of them characterized as “genocide.”

Even today, little, if anything meaningful, has been done to ameliorate a hopeless situation on the ground in most of the country. The ISG report ignores US war crimes in destroying a once prosperous nation, leaving in its wake a surreal lawless armed camp wasteland with few or no essential services by design including electricity, clean water, medical care, fuel and most everything else needed for sustenance and survival.

The commission report is also silent on the shocking 2006 Lancet study that accurately assessed the human toll of the war since 2003 using statistically reliable random household “cluster sampled” personal interviews with death certificate verifications in most cases. It estimated 655,000 violent deaths since March, 2003 attributable to the war stating the true number might be as high as 900,000 as interviewers were unable to survey the most violent parts of the country like Fallujah and Ramadi in al Anbar province (comprising one-third of the country) where mass killing still goes on daily as well as to include in the study the thousands of families in which all its members were killed. By its silence, the ISG is willfully participating in the cover-up of this massive crime against humanity and by its failure to offer redress is co-conspiratorially part of it.

The ISG also ignores the true cost to US forces in Iraq that began in the Gulf war and continues today. One-third or more of the 696,841 military personnel who served in the Gulf from August 2, 1990 to July 31, 1991 have filed claims for or have been reported by the Veteran’s Administration (VA) to be on some form of disability in 2004, most likely from the deadly effects of depleted uranium (DU) or other toxic poisoning the Pentagon tries to

suppress and deny.

Today the situation is far worse, but it'll be years before the final human toll is known. The effects of DU poisoning alone may be much more devastating now than in the Gulf war. In this conflict, the DU used in munitions is much more toxic than the kind used earlier. In addition to U-238 used earlier, today's DU weapons contain plutonium (the most toxic of all known substances), neptunium, and the highly radioactive uranium isotope U-236. According to a 1991 study by the UK Atomic Energy Authority, these elements are 100,000 times more dangerous than the U-238 in DU. It takes only the most minute, nearly unmeasurable, amount of this substance in one's body (that can easily be inhaled or otherwise ingested) to be fatal.

Further, the situation today is exacerbated by the current war having been ongoing for over three and one-half years (longer now than WW II) compared to the earlier six week one in 1991. Also, twice as many US forces have been engaged in this toxic environment for extended multiple tours of duty setting up the possibility for an enormous human calamity in years ahead as more of them return home, their bodies poisoned, and their lives and future health put seriously at risk.

In addition, daily life on the ground has been difficult to unbearable for US forces. Many have been ill-equipped with weapons, vehicles, ordinance, body armor and most everything else being consumed and not replaced. It's even worse for Forward Operating Bases often unable to get enough drinking water and other necessities such as proper food, clean clothes, a daily shower and a comfortable bed to sleep in. The effects of conflict and conditions on the ground have taken a devastating toll already with many there increasingly stressed and terrified out of their minds from physical and/or psychological trauma often ignored by commanders.

Most disturbing is the cover-up of the true death and injury toll already that's far higher than the published figures that are phony to avoid likely public anger if they were known. One incident suppressed happened on October 10, 2006 when Forward Base Falcon was attacked by mortars and rockets causing huge stocks of fuel and ammunition to explode most of the night killing or wounding hundreds of the 3,000 troops based there. Pictures gotten out show how extensive the damage was that leveled buildings to the ground explaining why the Pentagon wanted none of this to get out. It did but not in the major media and not in the ISG report.

Despite public disclosures, more accurate data overall is quietly coming out of the Pentagon, unreported in the corporate media, and unmentioned in the ISG report that shows the number of US forces killed is about four times the "official" total, and the number wounded may be about twice the official figure. Almost never mentioned is that many injuries include loss of limbs, brain and severe psychological damage and pain and other debilitations that will scar those affected and their families for the rest of their lives if after treatment and recovery they even survive.

None of this bothers the "Gang of Ten" commission members whose families are safe from this carnage and whose verdict rendered in their report effectively is to let the war go on without end, the enormous and rising human toll on Iraqis and Americans notwithstanding. For them, it's a price worth paying as it serves the interests of empire in which human beings are just another commodity to extract value from and then discard when no longer of further use. That's how the Bush administration and ISG members think and act.



## Omissions on the Domestic Front Related to the Iraq War and the “War on Terror” Allowing It to Happen

Domestic and foreign affairs are inextricably linked, and when the nation goes to war, or is planning to, everything is fair game on the home front, but don’t expect it will serve the public interest. Ordinary people always pay dearly and gain nothing beyond the right to make the weapons and pay the bills that in the current conflict are huge enough at the least to put an enormous strain on the economy and over time as the out-control costs mount may endanger the nation’s economic health. The ISG report doesn’t address this reckless endangerment that Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz believes may have an eventual price tag of well over \$2 trillion exacerbating already massive budget deficits far higher (\$760 billion in 2005, not the “official” \$318.5 billion) than the phony numbers reported to hide how bad things really are and on top of an alarming current account deficit now in the range of \$800 billion a year and climbing.

It also is unperturbed by the grim picture economist Laurence Kotlikoff presented in a recent detailed report for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis in which he stated, by some measures, the US is already bankrupt and unable to pay its creditors. Professor Kotlikoff believes US fiscal policy is so out-of-control, including for the reckless spending for wars, that the country’s debt is rising exponentially and will reach an incomprehensible and unmanageable \$65.9 trillion creating a fiscal calamity forcing the nation to default on its debt obligations. He later updated his figures and now believes the country’s future overall liability may reach the \$80 trillion level that will trigger an inevitable economic meltdown if it happens.

Spending hundreds of billions annually and rising for “defense” including all the off-the-books (but out of taxpayers’ pockets) allocations for Iraq will only speed up the pace to the future apocalypse Kotlikoff potentially foresees ahead. No problem for the Baker collective who operate with tunnel vision, and like those three monkeys, hear no, see no, and neither speak nor write anything beyond their re-flavored stay the course agenda for Iraq disguised to look like a new drawdown policy it isn’t.

## Other Domestic Front Omissions – The Destruction of Democracy and Loss of Personal Freedoms

The ISG was formed to serve US imperial interests including its wars of aggression for wealth and power. It doesn’t matter how destructive they are to the public welfare or how they’re allowing the nation to pass from a republic to tyranny. For every blow the US military strikes against the people of Iraq (and Afghanistan), the political establishment here and its “homeland security” enforcers inflict a similar amount of damage in kind against the body politic at home, not through the barrel of a gun (yet) but by the destruction of our civil liberties and human rights that stand in the way of the grandiose schemes people like Jim Baker and his “Gang of Ten” allies hope to pull off – to gain total imperial control over planet earth and the heavens above it with ordinary working people everywhere just more commodity inputs for their production meat grinder to be chewed up for profit and then discarded.

So for Baker and the ISG team, keeping mum about the war at home is part of the scheme to let it go on largely under the radar until the time comes to strip off the mask and send the jackboots and tanks to the streets making them look like the ones in Baghdad and with some of the same horrific fallout as things get ugly. For their plan to work, they must crush

the last remnants of a free society and create the Orwellian vision he described saying: "If you want a vision of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – forever." The ISG is trying to do with guile and deceit what George Bush already did in the new legislation he signed into law on October 17 giving himself what noted British journalist John Pilger calls "the power of unrestricted lawlessness" with scant public awareness it even happened.

On that day, with ISG tacit blessing and approval by its silence, Bush signed into law the infamous Military Commissions Act effectively giving himself the power to subvert the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The bill authorizes the use of torture and allows the president the right to call anyone an enemy of the state on his say alone with no corroborating evidence and strips the accused of all constitutional rights. It means anyone can be arrested, interrogated, tortured and incarcerated in a secret prison anywhere in the world, subject to the justice of a military tribunal like in Iraq or Guantanamo, with no competent defense or habeas right of appeal. It makes everyone an "enemy combatant" subject to the will of a man willing to use his power recklessly with no concern for its consequences.

George Bush went further that day privately and quietly signing into law a provision revising the Insurrection Act of 1807 that along with the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 prohibits the use of federal and National Guard troops for law enforcement inside the country except as allowed by the Constitution or expressly authorized by Congress in times of a national emergency like an insurrection.

No longer. The new Public Law 109-364 (HR 5122) allows the president the right to claim a public emergency, effectively declare martial law on his say alone, and send the jackboots to the streets to suppress whatever he calls public disorder that may include peaceful protests to redeem our constitutional rights now lost.

These new repressive laws add to the ones already on the books including infamous repressive Patriot Acts I and II and the National ID Act that will enable the government to track and control everyone in the country in the "Big Brother" fashion George Orwell foresaw in his dystopian book Nineteen Eighty-Four depicting a totalitarian national security police state society the US has now become. This act alone legalizes tyranny, but it's only one among others including the president having given himself unlimited power by designating himself a "unitary executive" with the right to circumvent the law in the name of national security on his say alone that a threat exists, with no evidence needed to warrant it or congressional approval.

The Congress approves, and again silence from the ISG members plotting their own schemes while watching the country's founding principles being destroyed making it all the easier for them to pull off their heist of the republic to go along with controlling Iraq and the rest of the Middle East and its oil treasure they'll go to any lengths to hold onto – and that's only for starters.

### What Chance for ISG Success

The Commission members believe their plan can succeed, but don't be deceived by their (thin) veneer of confidence. Other insiders aren't so sure, and according to the New York Times on December 9 the report "exposed deep fissures among Republicans over how to manage a war that many fear will haunt their party – and the nation – for years to come." From the hard right, critics call the ISG report a shameful retreat while moderate party voices expressed hope George Bush would adopt the Commission's principle

recommendations and “begin a process of disengagement from the long and costly war.” In the middle, White House officials concluded their own initial assessment of Baker’s work saying many of its proposals are “impractical or unrealistic.”

The Wall Street Journal’s editorial page had its own ideologically-driven say. As expected, it wants no part of engaging Iran and Syria and supports the Israel Lobby position instead. It called the report “a bipartisan strategic muddle ginned up for domestic political purposes.” The Journal editorial writers do have a way with words leaving nothing to their readers’ imagination.

Unmentioned in the Times story is the unreported view from the Pentagon high command that apparently is much different from its public stance agreeing with the blunt mid-October assessment of Britain’s Army Chief of Staff General Richard Dannatt who stated (in contradiction to the Blair government) the presence of UK forces in Iraq “exacerbates the security problems (and they should) get out some time soon” – meaning as soon as possible.

In simple terms, General Dannett and the Pentagon brass believe what most every honest observer understands – that the presence of an occupying force in Iraq is the cause of the problem, not its solution. The longer it remains, the more unstable and intolerable conditions will become. Increasing the force size and/or reshuffling the deck with fewer combat troops and more trainer/advisors will only increase the level of Iraqi resistance against them and ultimately elevate public opposition at home once people catch on and realize they’ve again been had and the Baker plan is just another scheme to keep our forces in Iraq in perpetuity to maintain the country as a colony and the region’s oil under US control.

Middle East expert and scholar Gilbert Achcar states in his new book *Perilous Power*, co-authored with Noam Chomsky, that the longer US forces remain in the region, the worse things will get, no matter what role they adopt that’s just cover for the US to maintain tight control. Achcar says the Bush administration since March, 2003 has been “stupid” and “will go down in history....as the undertaker of US interests in the region.” It doesn’t get any clearer, stronger, or more on the mark than that, and it goes to the heart of the problem the ISG was formed to deal with – maintaining US control over Middle East oil now in jeopardy and getting the US public to go along.

If the US occupation of Iraq ever ends without a reliable client state government in place, it will create the possibility of Washington’s worst nightmare – a majority Shiite ruled Iraq allied with Shiite Iran that might link with the Saudi Shias located in the bordering oil-rich part of the kingdom. If that Tripartite Shia Middle East alliance forms, it will control most of the world’s oil supply. It might then choose to align with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) formed to compete with the US for control of Central Asia’s huge energy reserves and whose core members are China and Russia giving those countries a chance for a leg up on the US at least for access to Middle East oil. The ISG and Bush administration will do all in its power to prevent this from happening, but the US has lost so much credibility in the region, they face a daunting task and long odds for success.

The ISG report mentions none of this, but does stress the importance of Iraq’s oil by mentioning it 63 times and calling for the US to help Iraq privatize its state-owned oil industry, opening it up to Big Oil foreign exploitive investment and the profits from it. If or when the US ends its occupation without leaving a reliable client state in place, it would be

hard to imagine Iraq will quickly forgive and forget and be willing to conduct business as usual with oil or other corporations from the country that laid waste to it and only left in humiliation and defeat.

It shows how hard it will be for the US to get out of this mess, and it's likely to prove more than Jim Baker, his high-powered team, and "all the king's horses and men" are up to. They stand virtually no chance to implement a coherent, workable plan for success short of the only operable one they'll never agree to until they no longer have a choice – a full and unconditional withdrawal. It only remains to be seen how long it will take for them and whatever administration is in power in Washington to draw that conclusion and how much time the public's willing to give them, the Bush administration and the majority Democrats in the Congress elected to chart a new course they've so far indicated no intention of doing.

It all adds up to an exercise in deception and futility, but in the end things will end up where they all began in 1990 before the long US assault against Iraq started. When it does, that country will again be free from a foreign occupier but will face a long, expensive and painful struggle to mend and rebuild. As happened when the US left Vietnam, this country will leave it to the Iraqis to recover and regenerate from the carnage and misery on their own that may take a generation or more to achieve and that for most now alive may never be possible.

This will be the legacy of the US invasion and occupation and tainted presidency of George Bush and his corrupted notion of moral superiority, claiming to have brought democracy, liberation and the benefits of western civilization to this blighted country but having to do it through the barrel of a gun. This time things unraveled faster than usual, but it only showed the people of Iraq reject what too many at home still believe – that the US is a benevolent democratic republic serving the will and needs of its people and supporting the rights and sovereignty of free people everywhere to live in peace and security. It's an illusion understood by most others around the world and gaining recognition at home as being just as hollow here as on the streets of Baghdad and Kabul.

It remains to be seen how long it will take for a mass awakening to occur to arouse the public at home, as it did in Iraq and Afghanistan, making them no longer willing to put up with the kind of abuse and neglect they've so far failed to resist. If history is a guide, it will happen, and when it does it may signal the denouement of another repressive imperial state succumbing to the arrogance of its own overreach, excess, hubris and disregard for the needs of its own people demanding redress. It can't come soon enough for the many around the world oppressed by it crying out "freedom now" and beginning to do something about getting it.

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