

CSIS tells Bush: Don't deploy SDI!

by Kathleen Klenetsky

A leading Washington think tank with extensive influence on Republican policymaking circles has called on President-elect George Bush not to deploy the Strategic Defense Initiative, claiming that doing so would harm national interests.

This advice is contained in a report issued just days before the presidential elections, by the Center for Strategic and International Studies' "Presidential Leadership Choices" project.

Conducted by some of CSIS's most prominent personnel, and underwritten in part by Archer Daniels Midland, run by Dwayne Andreas, Armand Hammer's designated successor in the East-West trade circuit, the study is intended to shape the strategic policy of the Bush administration. Although it is just one of numerous such "transition reports" inundating the President-elect, the fact that several of Bush's advisers—including Henry Kissinger and Kissinger's business partner, retired general Brent Scowcroft—were associated with the CSIS study, enhances its potential influence.

'Against U.S. interests'

Although the report contains some superficially sound recommendations—for example, it warns against the denuclearization of Western Europe, and cautions against taking Mikhail Gorbachov's reforms at face value—it is permeated by the same Metternichean, balance-of-power philosophy that has led to the grave strategic crisis in which the United States now finds itself. Rather than outlining a strategy for securing an enduring peace, based on the cultural and scientific superiority of Western civilization, the report's authors envision, at best, a never-ending, manichean struggle between East and West.

That bias is evident throughout, but especially in the study's recommendations on SDI. While calling on the new administration to "maintain a serious program of research and technological development applicable to defense against ballistic missiles and air-breathing systems," the study proposes such stringent restrictions, that a feasible defense could never be achieved.

The report states flatly, "This program should abide by the restrictive interpretation of the ABM Treaty; be evaluated by the criteria of cost-exchange ratios at the margin, degree of vulnerability of the defensive system, effect on stability,

and impact on the strategic balance. . . . Any deployment decision should be delayed until the 1990s at the earliest . . . it is against the national interest to adopt deployment of SDI as a goal at this time."

The justification for this dangerous advice echoes the worst fulminations of the anti-SDI lobby: First, say the authors, "There is no basis for confidence at present that a survivable defense shield is technologically within reach and affordable." That simply is untrue. A huge body of scientific evidence demonstrates that deployment of an advanced strategic defense system is well within reach. The major obstacle is the lack of funds allocated to the program, but the report's authors don't address that.

The report also claims that there are "very substantial problems of political, economic, and military stability attendant to a commitment to deploy." Well, yes, that's true. The Soviets, who have tried every trick in the book to sabotage the SDI, while investing huge amounts of money and manpower in their own strategic defense program, will no doubt scream and howl if the United States seriously pursues the SDI option.

This goes to the heart of the report's unstated premise: The United States should not undertake any initiative that might upset the balance between East and West—even if it is something essential to ensuring the nation's survival.

That presumption is apparent throughout. For example, the study asserts that, until such time as the Soviet threat clearly diminishes, "and particularly until Gorbachov's performance begins to match his rhetoric," discarding alliances or "letting them wither, is a dangerous course." But it undercuts this correct emphasis by demanding more allied "burden-sharing" (a favorite euphemism of those who want to decouple U.S. and European defenses), and proposing the withdrawal of some U.S. military forces from Western Europe and South Korea. Urging the new President to undertake a "comprehensive reexamination of U.S. military doctrines, national security interests and overseas commitments," the report asserts that the "apparently growing imbalance between the United States' foreign and defense policy resources and requirements" will force the new administration "to reassess its contributions to NATO" and other allies.

The CSIS recommendations on economic policy are equally dangerous. Rather than emphasize a technologically vectored economic growth program, the study demands deep cuts in domestic consumption, and points to the National Economic Commission, whose co-chairmen have called for slashing defense spending, as well as Social Security, Medicare, farm price supports, and other vital programs, as offering "the most promising opportunity to achieve a politically realistic approach to this challenge" (see page 4).

President-elect Bush has yet to respond publicly to the CSIS report. Hopefully, he'll put it in the same place where many of the other studies pouring into his office will end up: the trash can.