

Brent Scowcroft: architect of George Bush's 'Détente II'?

by Kathleen Klenetsky

The news media on both sides of the Atlantic have been featuring stories on how the Bush era signals "the return of the Establishment," or, more specifically, "the return of the Kissingerites," to positions of power in Washington. Typical is syndicated columnist Garry Will's recent comment that "looming behind the Bush cabinet is the . . . inescapable figure of Henry A. Kissinger."

This unfortunate truth is perhaps best underscored by George Bush's selection of retired Air Force Gen. Brent Scowcroft, a former adviser to President Jimmy Carter, as his national security adviser.

Scowcroft has long been identified with Kissinger, dating back to at least 1972, when Kissinger, then serving as Richard Nixon's national security adviser, chose Scowcroft, the president's military adviser, as his deputy, and subsequently saw to it that his protégé succeeded him as national security adviser in 1975.

Although Kissinger garnered the lion's share of the publicity for "Détente I," Scowcroft played a crucial behind-the-scenes role in nudging President Nixon down this disastrous road, whose chief milestones, the ABM and SALT I treaties, have guaranteed Soviet military superiority.

Since 1982, Scowcroft, who over the course of his military career, obtained advanced degrees in international relations from Columbia University, and taught Russian history for four years at West Point, has been earning a lucrative living as vice-chairman of Kissinger Associates, the international consulting firm established by the former Secretary of State.

The Kissinger-Scowcroft association is much more a meeting of the minds than a marriage of political or economic convenience. The two men think alike on almost every crucial issue, and, while Scowcroft frequently protests that he is not a Kissinger "clone," there is every reason to believe that he will represent Kissinger's policy orientation in the Bush administration's strategic councils.

Balance of power

This has extremely serious implications for the Bush administration. President Bush has already charged Scowcroft with the responsibility for carrying out a sweeping re-

view of current U.S. strategic policy, which the national security adviser has already indicated will be based on the assumption that a minimum of \$300 billion will have to be cut from the defense budget over the next five years, and whose consequences could include the death of the Strategic Defense Initiative and a partial U.S. troop withdrawal from Western Europe.

Despite his hawkish reputation, it is more than likely that Scowcroft, along with Secretary of State James Baker, and Baker's deputy, Kissinger Associates alumnus Lawrence Eagleburger, will convince Bush, as the Scowcroft-Kissinger combination convinced Nixon, that extending Reagan's suicidal "Détente II" is in the best interests of the country.

Scowcroft shares Kissinger's cynical, Metternichean worldview, which holds that maintaining the balance-of-power, rather than working for the triumph of a just international order based on the principles of natural law, should be the ultimate goal of governments. In terms of East-West relations, the faction that Kissinger and Scowcroft represent believes that the two superpowers should continue to strive for a global power-sharing arrangement, in which neither would hold the upper hand. In this view, the United States and NATO should scrupulously avoid anything that might upset this balance, in particular moving beyond deterrence as the cornerstone of its military policy, to one based on the deployment of a comprehensive defensive shield for the United States and its allies.

Aside from its craven immorality, this realpolitik is plain stupid: To assume that Moscow is perfectly content to *share* control of the world, flies in the face of all the evidence—historic, cultural, military—that Moscow has intensified its commitment to becoming the supreme ruler of a world-spanning empire.

That has not prevented Scowcroft from repeatedly making it clear that he wholeheartedly ascribes to this outlook. For example, an Atlantic Council Working Group on Strategic Stability and Arms Control, which he chaired, issued a report last year which maintained, "Theoretically speaking, each side would probably prefer a condition in which it was in a clearly dominant position. . . . Realistically, however . . . such advantage is not attainable." The report insisted

that, to ensure strategic stability, the United States, “while defending peace and freedom . . . must recognize that certain types of pressure on the Soviet Union could elicit Soviet reactions highly dangerous to peace, democratic values, and Western security,” among which would be a full-scale commitment to the SDI program as defined by President Reagan in his historic March 23, 1983 address.

Don’t deploy SDI

Although Scowcroft, like Kissinger, has gone on record frequently in recent months warning that the West should not take Mikhail Gorbachov’s *glasnost* and *perestroika* at face value, and must maintain its military alertness, like Kissinger, he has shown himself more than willing to promote military-strategic policies which can only undermine the West’s ability to defend itself against a possible Soviet onslaught. Although he initially opposed the INF agreement, arguing that it would be destabilizing to withdraw all U.S. medium-range nuclear weapons from Western Europe, he ultimately testified in favor of Senate ratification. And while he opposes the Reykjavik formula of eliminating all nuclear weapons by the year 2000, he is totally committed to pursuing arms-control agreements with the Soviets.

The real measure of what’s wrong with Scowcroft’s policy orientation is his extremely unsympathetic attitude toward the SDI. Since Reagan first unveiled his defense initiative in 1983, Scowcroft has campaigned vigorously and publicly against it.

Scowcroft has characterized as “impossible” Reagan’s vision of the SDI as a means to defend the populations of the United States and its allies, and has called early SDI deployment a “gamble” which the United States should avoid at all costs. Shortly before the U.S. presidential elections, Scowcroft, who was then serving on the Bush campaign’s strategic policy advisory committee, told the *Washington Post* that Bush is “clearly aware” that the SDI cannot continue to take an increasingly large share of a tight defense budget. “There is just absolutely no doubt that SDI cannot continue along the lines that Ronald Reagan wanted it to. It’s impossible.”

Scowcroft also supports the “narrow reading” of the 1972 ABM Treaty—as does Moscow—which has put killing restrictions on the progress of SDI. Testifying to the House Democratic Caucus on SDI in spring 1987, Scowcroft contended that “ten years’ U.S. adherence to the ‘narrow’ or traditional interpretation of the ABM Treaty would not hamper very seriously what we need to do in SDI. . . .”

More recently, Scowcroft helped prepare a special report on “Presidential Leadership Choices,” issued this fall by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C., which stated flatly that the SDI program should be conducted only within “the restrictive interpretation of the ABM Treaty,” and which asserted, “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 same CSIS report demanded more allied “burden-sharing,” and called on the new U.S. administration to undertake a “comprehensive reexamination of U.S. military doctrines, national security interests, and overseas commitments,” with a view toward withdrawing at least some U.S. troops from both Western Europe and South Korea.

Together with James Woolsey, Scowcroft wrote the defense and foreign policy chapter of the American Agenda report, which former Presidents Carter and Ford presented to President-elect Bush shortly after the elections. In that chapter, they contend that mammoth cuts in the defense budget are unavoidable, and, “The only ways to make substantial early savings in the defense budget are to cancel major programs and to reduce the size of the armed forces.” (Woolsey, a retired admiral who currently operates out of CSIS, has also served as a top policy adviser to Tennessee Democrat Sen. Albert Gore, who was Armand Hammer’s choice for the Democratic presidential nomination.)

In this same report, Scowcroft strongly implied that the best way to deal with the issue of SDI is to turn it into a plan for the limited defense of elements of the U.S. deterrent—an idea akin to the ALPS (Accidental Launch Protection System) proposed by Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) in January 1987, an idea provided to Nunn by Kissinger.

On the issue of strategic modernization, Scowcroft has already made it clear that he strongly favors development of the mobile, single-warhead Midgetman missile, as opposed to the much more powerful, multiple-warhead MX. Indeed, in 1983, as chairman of the Presidential Commission on Strategic Forces, Scowcroft engineered the “compromise” with Congress on the MX, which supposedly saved the multiple-warhead missile, but which actually led to a drastic scaling back of the program.

Scowcroft is associated with a number of prominent thinktanks and policy-shaping institutions. Among the most important is the Washington-based CSIS, stomping ground to such influentials as Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Through CSIS, Scowcroft collaborates closely with a group of like-minded Democrats, led by Senate Armed Services Committee chairman Sam Nunn, and his House counterpart, Les Aspin (D-Wisc.). This longstanding alliance is almost certain to result in a devastating transformation of the SDI. As ALPS-author Nunn chucklingly responded during an interview on ABC-TV Jan. 22, when asked if Scowcroft agrees with his view on the SDI, “Brent Scowcroft and I think alike on a lot of things.”

In addition, Scowcroft is affiliated with the Atlantic Institute and the Aspen Institute. Together with Harvard professor Joseph Nye, who was Dukakis’s chief foreign policy adviser during the campaign, Scowcroft chairs the Aspen Strategy Group, which has been a major source of propaganda for U.S. desertion of Europe (“decoupling”) and attacks against the SDI.