

Dick Cheney: another Kissinger clone in the Bush administration?

by Kathleen Klenetsky

After stretching out the John Tower confirmation carnival for week after agonizing week, during which time the Defense Department had no effective representation in either the formulation of the defense budget or the sweeping strategic review which National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft is carrying out, Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and his Senate Armed Services Committee put their imprimatur on Rep. Richard Cheney's (R-Wyo.) nomination as defense secretary in near record time.

President Bush announced Cheney's appointment on Friday, March 10. The Armed Services Committee opened its confirmation hearings on Tuesday, March 14. Two days later, on the morning of Thursday, March 16, the committee, no doubt influenced by chairman Nunn's declaration that "Congressman Cheney is highly qualified to be secretary of defense" and "has my strong support," voted unanimously to confirm Cheney. The full Senate then acted almost immediately, voting to confirm Cheney on Friday, March 17, by a similarly unanimous 92 to 0 vote.

While the FBI investigative report on Tower included several hundred pages of hearsay, gossip, and innuendo, its report on Cheney took all of four days to complete, and occupied only seven pages.

Kissinger coup?

Why did Nunn, (with help from the FBI), bend over backwards to rush Cheney through the confirmation process, when he did his utmost to skewer Tower?

The explanation is that he and Cheney belong to a select group of influential congressmen and senators who have been tapped by the two think tanks most closely associated with Henry Kissinger—the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Aspen Institute—to function as their mouthpieces on Capitol Hill.

Informed observers believe that Cheney's selection as defense secretary represents a further significant extension of Kissinger's influence within the Bush administration.

They note that Kissinger protégé Brent Scowcroft is already ensconced as national security adviser, while Lawrence Eagleburger, another Kissinger clone, and, like Scowcroft, an alumnus of Kissinger's controversial international consulting firm, Kissinger Associates, will be nicely posi-

tioned to run the State Department, in his new post as deputy secretary of state.

With Cheney at Defense, Kissinger's faction will be able to determine the entire gamut of U.S. strategic and foreign policy decisions—with all the hideous consequences that implies for the stability of the United States and the rest of the world.

Establishment cadre

A five-term Republican congressman from Wyoming, who served as Chief of Staff in the Ford White House, Cheney is about the furthest thing from a hick as you can get. He is one of the few members of Congress who has ever been asked to serve as a director of the New York Council on Foreign Relations, the premier policymaking institution of the U.S. Establishment—an honor that is usually reserved for such patrician types as Cyrus Vance or John Lindsay.

Together with Sam Nunn and House Armed Services Committee chairman Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), Cheney forms an elite cadre on the Hill whose task it is to steer congressional policymaking in the direction desired by their Establishment masters.

During his years in Washington, Cheney has developed and maintained a multifaceted relationship to the Kissinger network, which is mediated in part through his long, personal friendship with Brent Scowcroft, as well as through CSIS and the Aspen Institute. Not only does Cheney sit on CSIS's advisory board, along with Kissinger and Scowcroft, but he and Nunn also co-chair CSIS's Grand Strategy Forum, a panel of strategic policy "experts" personally established by Kissinger and David Abshire.

In addition, Cheney participates in another CSIS project, which was set up in spring of 1986 under former National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, for the purpose of assessing the "full range of issues of deterrence, force structure and arms control." Other members of the project include Nunn and Aspin.

The Kissinger-Cheney link also crops up in two of the Aspen Institute's more important projects, the Aspen Strategy Group, whose other participants include Sam Nunn, as well as such prominent figures in the Pugwash East-West disarmament network as Paul Doty and Joseph Nye, former

Democratic presidential candidate Mike Dukakis's chief defense policy adviser, and the Aspen U.S.-Soviet Program, which is heavily oriented toward the U.S. Congress.

Indeed, an Aspen Institute spokesman bluntly disclosed in an interview last year that the purpose of the U.S.-Soviet program is to create "a cadre in Congress who'll represent the Aspen policy perspective."

Cheney's close working relationship with CSIS and the Aspen Institute provides a much better clue to his policy orientation than does his congressional voting record, which generally conforms to standard moderate-conservative Republican positions.

Unless Cheney breaks free of the CSIS-Aspen-Kissinger profile, which does not seem a very likely prospect at this point, one can expect that he will champion the following policies, once he actually takes the reins of the Defense Department:

- A heavy emphasis on the decoupling of NATO, under the guise of "burden-sharing" or encouraging Western Europe to become more independent in its defense capabilities. Both CSIS and the Aspen Institute have been in the forefront of efforts to "restructure"—a euphemism for dismember—the NATO alliance, as part of a broader "New Yalta" redivision of the globe, that effectively cedes the entire European continent to the Soviet Union.

Last fall, for example, CSIS published a series of policy recommendations to President-elect Bush, which, among other things, called on the new administration to step up pressure on Europe for more defense "burden-sharing," and to consider the withdrawal of some U.S. military forces from Western Europe and South Korea.

The study, which reportedly depended heavily on input from Scowcroft, also urged Bush to undertake a "comprehensive reexamination of U.S. military doctrines, national security interests, and overseas commitments," because 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. Bush promptly ordered such a study—the administration's vaunted strategic view, due out this spring—and put Scowcroft in charge.

- A "final solution" to the SDI, involving lethal funding cutbacks, and the transformation of the program from its original conception as a high-tech, comprehensive population defense, to a system employing existing technologies and limited to either missile-defense, or an Accidental Launch Protection System (ALPS), as advocated by Sam Nunn and Brent Scowcroft.

The same CSIS report cited above called for stringent restrictions on SDI. It stated 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." And it

demanded that "any deployment decision should be delayed until the 1990s at the earliest," on the grounds that "it is against the national interest to adopt deployment of SDI as a goal at this time."

Cheney's confirmation hearings, though hardly probing, provided some glimpse into his current thinking on strategic issues. And that glimpse was hardly encouraging. For example, he admitted that the Bush administration's decision not to seek any increase in defense spending for FY 1989, may force substantial reductions in SDI funding and cutbacks in American troop strength—but, despite his reputation as an SDI advocate, expressed no opposition to the defense freeze. "The bottom line is, we can't buy everything we want to buy with the money we have today. I see that as a mandate."

Cheney replied to a question about his stand on the SDI with the statement: "I hope I wouldn't be an uncritical supporter" of the program, adding that, while he thinks SDI "is a good, sound idea" that "could add to deterrence," how much funding the program should receive "is an open question." Although he has supported increases in SDI funding, he also strongly advocated legislation to reorient the program away from sophisticated technologies, such as the x-ray laser, to a more immediately deployable system that would be consistent with the 1972 ABM Treaty—i.e., a point-defense system.

In his confirmation testimony, Cheney also sent typically Kissingerian mixed signals on his view of the Soviet threat. Asked whether he thought that Gorbachov's "reforms" meant that the U.S. could significantly reduce its defense budget, Cheney replied that to do so would be a "grave mistake at this point," but only because "there is a possibility Gorbachov will be replaced by someone who does not share his *non-threatening* attitude" (emphasis added).

The secret government

Another important factor to be considered are Cheney's ties to the "secret government" apparatus which orchestrated the Iran-Contra operation. When Bush nominated Tower for the Pentagon post, questions were raised about whether this represented a pay-off for the cover-up of Bush's role in the Iran-Contra fiasco which Tower helped engineer as one of the three members of the presidential commission which investigated the scandal. These questions equally apply to Cheney, who provided the same service to Bush as the leading minority member of the congressional Iran-Contra committee.

Cheney was no doubt tapped for that role, because of his own extensive involvement with the Project Democracy network, most evident in his vociferous backing for the drug-running Contras. He fought tooth and nail against efforts to cut funding for the guerrillas, and voted for such measures as a 1987 amendment mandating the United States to recognize the Contras as the legitimate government of Nicaragua.