

..... Clarke showed, Cheney took an unprecedentedly active role, shaping policy before it got to the President. This is not something that *EIR*, and certain others, did not know already, but Clarke—from his insider vantage point—has made the case crystal clear. In so doing, he has performed an enormous public service, by laying out the internal situation within the Bush Administration in a manner which leaves no reasonable doubts, neither as to the manner in which Cheney and Company dragged the country into the Iraq war, nor as to the truth of Lyndon LaRouche’s estimation of what is at stake, for the nation and the world, in the ongoing U.S. Presidential election campaign.

O’Neill and Clarke

In mid-January, when former Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill described President Bush as being so disengaged during Cabinet meetings that he “was like a blind man in a roomful of deaf people,” and charged that Iraq was on the agenda of the new Bush Administration from Day One, O’Neill was attacked and vilified by the White House, and an investigation was opened as to whether he had improperly utilized classified documents.

The immediate impact of the O’Neill revelations was stunning. Yet, had the White House not sat for months on the draft of Clarke’s book, it would have preceded O’Neill’s memoirs, since Clarke’s original intention was to have his book out by Christmas. Both books present a similar picture of Bush: disengaged from most aspects of policymaking, uninterested in serious analysis of world events, and inclining toward simplistic bravado.

Clarke is measured in what he writes about Bush, saying that it was clear to him “that the critiques of him as a dumb, lazy rich kid were somewhat off the mark.” Generously, Clarke continued: “When focussed, he asked the kind of questions that revealed a results-oriented mind, but he looked for the simple solution, the bumper-sticker description of the problem.” The problem, Clarke continues, is that the important issues, such as Iraq, “were laced with important subtlety and nuance,” and needed analysis, but “Bush and his inner circles had no interest in complicated analysis; on the issues they cared about, they already knew the answers; it was received wisdom.”

Clarke contrasts Clinton—the voracious reader and seeker of new information—with Bush, of whom Clarke had been told early on: “The President is not a big reader.”

As to how this played out, around the crucial matters of the 9/11 attacks, and the drive for an invasion of Iraq, Clarke had more to say in the March 31 “Hardball” interview, which we will elaborate below.

Cheney Tips the Scales

As we have previously shown (*EIR*, Feb. 6, 2004), the O’Neill book presented a devastating picture of the inner workings of the Administration—and of the sinister role of

Clarke Makes the Case: Vulcans Run Dumb Bush

by Edward Spannaus

Richard Clarke, the former U.S. counter-terrorism coordinator who served in four administrations, has made the case against George Bush and Dick Cheney: Even though Clarke is too polite, explicitly to say it, it is clear from his book¹ and interviews, that George W. Bush is as dumb a President as you’d ever want to find, and that Vice President Dick Cheney is the figure who controls the President.

In a March 31 interview on MSNBC’s “Hardball with Chris Matthews,” Clarke gave the most precise first-hand description yet, of the manner in which Dick Cheney took control of the Bush inner circle, and “tipped the balance” between the “Vulcans” and the more moderate elements of the Bush Cabinet around Colin Powell and others. Particularly in the so-called National Security Council “Principals” grouping,

1. Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America’s War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, March 2004).



Richard Clarke has done an enormous public service, in exposing the security failures of the Bush-Cheney Administration before 9/11, and its use of the 9/11 attacks as the pretext to go to war with Iraq.

Dick Cheney. Author Ron Suskind wrote, for example: “The President was caught in an echo chamber of his own making, cut off from everyone other than a circle around him, that’s tiny and getting smaller and in concert on everything—a circle that conceals him from public view and keeps him away from the one thing he needs most: honest, disinterested perspectives about what’s real and what the hell he might do about it.

“But O’Neill had stopped trying to discern where Cheney ended and the President began. Not only was it not clear—it might not be pertinent. . . . It was clear to O’Neill that Cheney and a handful of others had become ‘a praetorian guard’ that encircled the President.”

Clarke describes the same situation, from his own vantage point. Take, for example, the *context* surrounding the now famous passage of Clarke’s book, in which he describes how President Bush pulled him aside on the evening of Sept. 12, 2001, and told him to review all of his intelligence for any Iraqi links to the previous day’s attacks. “See if Saddam did this,” Bush said. “See if he’s linked in any way. . . . I want to know any shred.”

When Clarke protested that “al-Qaeda did this,” and that he and his colleagues had never found any linkages between al-Qaeda and Iraq, Bush testily ordered: “Look into Iraq, Saddam.”

That’s where the media blurbs leave off. But what comes next in Clarke’s account, is the stunned reaction of his colleague Lisa Gordon-Hagerty, who was also present. When a third colleague saw the expressions on Clarke’s and Gordon-Hagerty’s faces as Bush left the White House Situation Room, and asked them: “What just happened in there?” she replied: “Wolfowitz got to him.”

Clark was asked about this incident by host Chris Matthews, during the “Hardball” interview, and his elaboration is most useful, and worth quoting at length.

Matthews, referring to Wolfowitz, asked how “one guy” got that much influence: “Is he Svengali?” Clark responded that he didn’t think that Wolfowitz did this by himself, explaining: “I think the entire group that calls itself the Vulcans—the Vice President, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Rice—all of those people who taught Bush national security in the year before he became President, I think they all came in with an agenda that had Iraq on the top of the list or certainly in the top three, and they wanted to overthrow Saddam Hussein.”

Later, Matthews asked Clarke: “If the President had been surrounded, not by the people you mentioned—not by Rumsfeld, and the Vice President, and their deputies, Scooter Libby, and all of these hawks who were premeditated, want to do this, and we all know this now—suppose he was surrounded by, as his key advisers, Colin Powell, Richard Armitage, Richard Haas, people of that sort of moderate view of things, who might well have gone after al-Qaeda. Do you think he would have gone in their direction? Was he moved by his advisers?”

Matthews noted that the Bush Administration was originally set up as “a very balanced administration,” and continued: “You had Christie Whitman, Paul O’Neill, Colin Powell, moderates, along with the more hawkish conservatives, right-wingers, some of them. And it didn’t work out that way, why not? Why weren’t the moderate voices heard in the President’s inner council?”

This exchange then followed:

Clarke: Because, within the National Security cluster of the Cabinet, there was just Colin Powell in that category.

Matthews: And he always got beaten by Rummy and Cheney?

Clarke: Because the Vice President started getting involved at the Cabinet level. The Vice President started attending meetings—

Matthews: Did he tip the scales?

Clarke: Of course.

Matthews: Did he have his thumb on the scales?

Clarke: Look, the Vice President was in meetings that Vice Presidents have never been in before, helping shape the policy before it got to the President.

‘That Little Terrorist in Afghanistan’

Matthews asked Clarke if he thinks that Cheney makes decisions, and Clarke answered, “I think he advises.”

“Had he been against the war with Iraq,” Matthews asked, “would we have gone?”

“I doubt it,” Clarke answered. “He was critical.”

Clark said that Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Rice “all had Iraq on the mind from the day they came into office,” but he said he cannot be sure about Bush, because he didn’t get to spend that much time with him. But as to the final decision to go to war, Clarke stated: “It was clearly his decision, and he believed in it, and I think he probably still believes in it, and that’s the sad part.”

Asked whether the President bears any grudges against Cheney or those who gave him this advice, Clarke answered: “I think, only he knows, and there’s no indication, that I’ve ever seen or heard from anybody, that the President has any doubts. I think he’s a true believer.”

Lyndon LaRouche notes in his statement preceding this article that he does not agree with the simplistic way in which Clarke throws the term “al-Qaeda” around; but this is not the key issue. The point is that, under the strategic and economic conditions in which this Administration came into office, something like a “Reichstag Fire” was to be expected—as LaRouche himself had forecast. Clarke, LaRouche notes, had a reputation as a hard-grinding fanatic when it came to getting his job done, and LaRouche adds, “I would hire professionals like him in my administration any day, and be thankful that I had them around to do battle with.”

The crucial feature of Clarke’s book and his testimony, is his exposure of the security failures of the Bush-Cheney Administration before 9/11, and its use of the 9/11 attacks as the pretext to do, what they had wanted to do all along: go to war with Iraq again.

No matter how hard the White House yells and screams in denial, Clarke presents an overwhelming case that terrorism was simply not a priority for the administration before Sept. 11. But Iraq was. During the first week of the new administration, Clarke wrote to Condoleezza Rice and her deputy Stephen Hadley, asking “urgently” for a meeting of the national security “Principals” (normally, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the National Security Advisor) to discuss what he regarded as the imminent al-Qaeda threat. Rice said that it had to be discussed first, or “framed,” by the “Deputies Committee.” It then took until April to even arrange a meeting of the Deputies Committee on terrorism; and then, as Clarke describes it, Wolfowitz tried to hijack the meeting, ridiculing Clarke’s emphasis on Osama bin Laden, whom Wolfowitz called “that little terrorist in Afghanistan,” and insisting that the meeting focus on Iraq—even though the CIA deputy agreed with Clarke that there was no terrorist threat from Iraq, and the State Department deputy, Richard Armitage, agreed with Clarke on the priority to be given to al-Qaeda.

Nothing of consequence came of the meeting, and the Principals were preoccupied with other issues: the ABM Treaty, the Kyoto Treaty, and Iraq. It wasn’t until Sept. 4,

2001, that the Principals’ meeting on terrorism that Clarke had requested in January, finally took place.

Gary Hart: Another Warning Ignored

Confirmation of key elements of Clarke’s account also comes from Gary Hart, the co-chair, with Warren Rudman, of the U.S. Commission on National Security, which delivered its report to President Bush on Jan. 31, 2001.

In a Feb. 2, 2004 interview with *Salon*, Hart recalls what happened when Congress began to take their report and recommendations seriously: “And then as Congress started to move on this, and the heat was turned up, George Bush—and this is often overlooked—held a press conference or made a public statement on May 5, 2001, calling on Congress not to act, and saying he was turning over the whole matter to Dick Cheney.

“So this wasn’t just neglect, it was an active position by the administration. He said, ‘I don’t want Congress to do anything until the vice president advises me.’ We now know from Dick Clarke that Cheney never held a meeting on terrorism; there was never any kind of discussion on the department of homeland security that we had proposed. There was no vice presidential action on this matter.

“In other words, a bipartisan commission of seven Democrats and seven Republicans who had spent two and a half years studying the problem—a group of Americans with a cumulative 300 years in national security affairs—recommended to the President of the United States, on a reasonably urgent basis, the creation of a Cabinet-level agency to protect our country—and the President did nothing!”

Hart also recounted a meeting he had with Condoleezza Rice on Sept. 6, 2001 (two days after the Principals’ meeting described by Clarke). Hart told Rice: “Get going on homeland security. You don’t have all the time in the world.” Her response, Hart says, was to say “I’ll talk to the vice president about it.” Which confirms, not only Clarke’s contention that there was absolutely no sense of urgency about terrorism, but also that it was Cheney who was in charge.

Taking Advantage of 9/11

That’s what happened, or didn’t happen, *before* Sept. 11, 2001. What is equally significant in Clarke’s account, is what happened afterwards.

The next morning, before the dust had even settled from the previous day’s attacks, “I walked into a series of discussions about Iraq,” Clarke recounts. “At first I was incredulous. . . . Then I realized with almost a sharp physical pain that Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were going to try to take advantage of this national tragedy to promote their agenda about Iraq.” Clarke notes that since the beginning of the administration, and well before, they had been pushing for a war with Iraq. “My friends in the Pentagon had been telling me that the word was we would be invading Iraq sometime in 2002.”

On that morning, Sept. 12, Wolfowitz was arguing that the attacks were too sophisticated for a terrorist group to have

pulled off by itself (a true enough statement, as *EIR* has shown). But Wolfowitz's answer was that the attackers needed a state sponsor, and that state was—guess who—Iraq.

This was not the first time Clarke had heard this sort of thing from Wolfowitz, as we already noted in connection with the April 2001 Deputies meeting. At that meeting, Wolfowitz had told Clarke: "You give bin Laden too much credit. He could not do all these things like the 1993 attack on New York, not without a state sponsor. Just because FBI and CIA have failed to find the linkages, does not mean they don't exist."

Clarke describes his reaction at the time. "I could hardly believe it, but Wolfowitz was actually spouting the totally discredited Laurie Mylroie theory that Iraq was behind the 1993 truck bomb at the World Trade Center, a theory that had been investigated for years and found to be totally untrue."

What Clarke is describing, is what he calls the "legend" that had grown up around one of the suspects later arrested in Pakistan, Ramzi Yousef. This legend was a product of Laurie Mylroie (a nut-case operating out of the late Robert Strausz-Hupé's Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia), who claimed that there were actually two Ramzi Yousefs—the one arrested in Pakistan, and another who was "a mastermind of Iraqi intelligence, the Muhabarat."

Even though the now-incarcerated Ramzi Yousef was implicated by many witnesses, writes Clarke: "This did not stop author Laurie Mylroie from asserting that the real Ramzi Yousef was not in the Federal Detention Center in Manhattan, but lounging at the right hand of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. Mylroie's thesis was that there was an elaborate plot by Saddam to attack the United States. . . . Her writing gathered a small cult following, including the recently relieved CIA Director Jim Woolsey, and Wolfowitz."²

Mind Control?

Coming back to Clarke's assessment of President Bush, he says in his book: "I doubt that anyone ever had a chance to make the case to him that attacking Iraq would actually make America less secure and strengthen the broader radical Islamic terrorist movement. Certainly he did not hear that from the small circle of advisors who alone are the people whose views he respects and trusts."

Clarke says that any President, after 9/11, would have declared a "war on terrorism" and would have ended the Afghan sanctuary for al-Qaeda. Any President would have stepped up domestic preparedness and security measures. What was unique about Bush, Clarke suggests, "was his selec-

tion as an object lesson for potential state sponsors of terrorism, not a country that had been engaging in anti-U.S. terrorism, but one that had not been, Iraq. It is hard to imagine another President making that choice." Others would have tried other things, such as trying to stabilize other Arab countries and promote an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement, Clarke says, "but one thing we know they would not have done is inflame Islamic opinion and further radicalize Muslim youth into heightened hatred of America in the way that invading Iraq has done."

Noting that Bush played into the hands of those who wanted proof that America is at war with Islam, Clarke concludes: "It was as if Usama bin Laden, hidden in some high mountain redoubt, were engaging in long-range mind control of George Bush, chanting 'invade Iraq, you must invade Iraq.'"

What Clarke really knows, as is clear from the rest of his book, is that those engaging in this mind control of the President, were actually much closer at hand.

'Against All Enemies'

A final note, about the significance of Clarke's title, which is of course taken from the oath of office that everyone from the President, to members of the military, to other Federal officers, take, pledging to defend the nation against all enemies, foreign *and domestic*. Clarke says in his Preface that this means defending the Constitution "against those who would use the terrorist threat to assault the liberties the Constitution enshrines." At the end of the book, Clarke specifically goes after the administration and Attorney General John Ashcroft for his handling of the case of Jose Padilla (an American citizen imprisoned without any legal recourse); for his war on librarians under the Patriot Act; and for his seeking further infringements of civil liberties under the "Patriot II" bill. Ashcroft, Clarke contends, "managed to persuade much of the country that the needed reforms of the Patriot Act were actually the beginning of fascism."

This is not a new concern of Clarke's. Whatever his fanaticism and obsession about al-Qaeda in the late 1990s—when he was urging systematic bombings of al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan—he was warning already at that time about the threats to civil liberties that could flow from a domestic over-reaction to terrorism, pointing to the suspension of *habeas corpus* during the Civil War, the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, and the post-war McCarthy "red scare."³ It's another lesson which Bush is too dumb to understand, and about which his controller Cheney could care less—but it is an integral part of Clarke's case against this administration's tragic blunders.

2. Less than three weeks after 9/11, this writer heard Woolsey make a total fool out of himself in front of a meeting of the American Bar Association's national security law committee, trying to argue that Saddam Hussein was behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing; on that occasion, he openly promoted Mylroie's crackpot theory. Woolsey's contention was that Saddam Hussein was likely behind the Sept. 11 attacks as well.

3. This writer heard Clarke's warning of the dangers to civil liberties, and urging that the nation must not throw out the Bill of Rights in reaction to a terrorist attack, at two meetings of the American Bar Association's national security law committee, in July and again in November of 1998.