

BUSH: GRAND STRATEGIST

By Tony Blankley

The Boston Globe -- the respected, liberal newspaper owned by the New York Times -- ran an article last week that Bush critics may wish to read carefully. It is a report on a new book that argues that President Bush has developed and is ably implementing only the third American grand strategy in our history. The author of this book, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Harvard Press) to be released in March, is John Lewis Gaddis, the Robert A. Lovett professor of military and naval history at Yale University.

The Boston Globe describes Mr. Gaddis as "the dean of Cold War studies and one of the nation's most eminent diplomatic historians." In other words, this is not some put-up job by an obscure right-wing author. This comes from the pinnacle of the liberal Ivy League academic establishment. If you hate George W. Bush, you will hate this Boston Globe story because it makes a strong case that Mr. Bush stands in a select category with presidents Franklin Delano Roosevelt and James Monroe (as guided by his secretary of state, John Q. Adams) in implementing one of only three grand strategies of American foreign policy in our two-century history.

As the Globe article describes in an interview with Mr. Gaddis: "Grand strategy is the blueprint from which policy follows. It envisions a country's mission, defines its interests, and sets its priorities. Part of grand strategy's grandeur lies in its durability: A single grand strategy can shape decades, even centuries of policy."

According to this analysis, the first grand strategy by Monroe/Adams followed the British invasion of Washington and the burning of the White House in 1814. They responded to that threat by developing a policy of gaining future security through territorial expansion -- filling power vacuums with American pioneers before hostile powers could get in. That strategy lasted throughout the 19th and the early 20th centuries, and accounts for our continental size and historic security.

FDR's plans for the post-World War II period were the second grand strategy and gained American security by establishing free markets and self-determination in Europe as a safeguard against future European wars, while creating the United Nations and related agencies to help us manage the rest of the world and contain the Soviets. The end of the Cold War changed that and led, according to Mr. Gaddis, to President Clinton's assumption that a new grand strategy was not needed because globalization and democratization were inevitable. "Clinton said as much at one point. I think that was shallow. I think they were asleep at the switch," Mr. Gaddis observed.

That brings the professor to George W. Bush, who he describes as undergoing "one of the most surprising transformations of an underrated national leader since Prince Hal became Henry V." Clearly, Mr. Gaddis has not been a long-time admirer of Mr. Bush. But he is now.

He observes that Mr. Bush "undertook a decisive and courageous reassessment of American grand strategy following the shock of the 9/11 attacks. At his doctrine's center, Bush placed the democratization of the Middle East and the urgent need to prevent terrorists and rogue states from getting nuclear weapons. Bush also boldly rejected the constraints of an outmoded international system that was really nothing more than a snapshot of the configuration of power that existed in 1945. "

It is worth noting that John Kerry and the other Democrats' central criticism of Mr. Bush -- the prosaic argument that he should have taken no action without UN approval -- is rejected by Mr. Gaddis as being a proposed policy that would be constrained by an "outmoded international system."

In assessing Mr. Bush's progress to date, the Boston Globe quotes Mr. Gaddis: "So far the military action in Iraq has produced a modest improvement in American and global economic conditions; an intensified dialogue within the Arab world about political reform; a withdrawal of American forces from Saudi Arabia; and an increasing nervousness on the part of the Syrian and Iranian governments as they contemplated the consequences of being surrounded by American clients or surrogates. The United States has emerged as a more powerful and purposeful actor within the international system than it had been on September 11, 2001."

In another recent article, written before the Iraqi war, Mr. Gaddis wrote: "[Bush's] grand strategy is actually looking toward the culmination of the Wilsonian project of a world safe for Democracy, even in the Middle East. And this long-term dimension of it, it seems to me, goes beyond what we've seen in the thinking of more recent administrations. It is more characteristic of the kind of thinking, say, that the Truman administration was doing at the beginning of the Cold War."

Is Mr. Bush becoming an historic world leader in the same category as FDR, as the eminent Ivy League professor argues? Or is he just a lying nitwit, as the eminent former Democratic Party Chairman and Clinton fund-raiser Terry McAuliffe argues?

You can put me on the side of the professor.