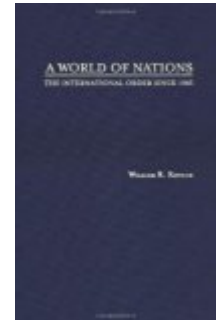


William Keylor. *A World of Nations: The International Order since 1945.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. xxiv + 418 pp. \$60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-510601-5.



Reviewed by Tony Smith

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America and the World

William Keylor is in the history and international relations departments at Boston University. His latest book is fact-crammed and 452 pages in length, dealing with a host of issues that have characterized international relations since 1945. While the bulk of the volume is taken up with the history of the Cold War, Keylor goes out of his way to be inclusive in his report, looking at all the major regions of the world, not only at Washington and Moscow. Of the thirteen chapters, five are on East/West relations (largely the United States and the Soviet Union), but two are on the Middle East, two on Latin America, one on Africa, two on Asia, and one on European integration. Although a major focus is the Cold war, Keylor does deal with other issues and carries events forward into the twenty-first century.

While Keylor makes it very clear that he considers the nation state likely to remain the dominant actor in world politics, he devotes substantial attention to economic and military dimensions of world affairs, which have a life apart from what a focus on the actions of the state alone

can hope to communicate. Again, in the epilogue, he makes it clear that although some important forces are indeed transnational, he does not embrace "globalization" as a force in its own right capable of fundamentally redefining international relations, a field of study he continues to see largely as state-centric in character.

In 1984, Keylor published the first of what are now four editions on *The Twentieth-Century World: An International History* (also published by Oxford). Readers of this review should be careful not to confuse these volumes with his recent work. Keylor sees *A World of Nations* as more limited in historical range but broader in scope and more detailed in discussion than *Twentieth-Century World*, which starts its analysis at the beginning in the events leading up to World War I, not in 1945. He projects another edition of *Twentieth-Century World* (presumably with a somewhat different title) for 2005.

A World of Nations is unquestionably a most useful text, the kind of book everyone should have on the shelf for purposes of reference. Nevertheless, I do have three reservations about the

study. First, I wish it were more forcefully formulated in analytical terms. For example, the opening chapter is entitled "The Ideological Partition of Europe," yet just what made the Soviet and American blueprints for world order so different, indeed so incompatible, is never made clear.

A second reservation is linked to the first: students can learn a great deal from seeing how controversies over the meaning ascribed to historical developments play themselves out. For example, there has been a rich debate over rival interpretations as to why the Cold War developed as it did, but these debates are not presented here. Introducing students to different competing forms of analysis is in my opinion a fundamental element of successful pedagogy.

Finally, I think more emphasis on the shaping role of the United States in world affairs since 1945 would have been in order. To his credit, Keylor wants to be sure that factors outside the direct control of Moscow and Washington get their due in the history he recounts, but given how primordial the role of the United States has been throughout the nearly sixty-year period he reviews, my own feeling is that more attention to the policies of this state actor would have given a stronger sense of gravity to the volume.

A World of Nations should be a useful book for survey courses in history, political science, and international relations. It is handsomely published with a good index, several period photos, and nineteen maps.

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