

T.G. Fraser and Donette Murray. *America and the World since 1945*. Studies in Contemporary History Series. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. Pp. xxvi, 323. Paper, \$12.95; ISBN 0-333-75432-8.

Historians Fraser and Murray provide a concise overview of United States foreign policy and its consequences using presidential administrations as the organizational rubric for their textbook. Beginning with Harry S Truman and the onset of the Cold War and ending with the challenges the second Bush administrative faced beginning on September 11, 2001, the authors take the reader through the second half of the twentieth century in a methodical, well-organized manner. Except for Truman and Richard M. Nixon who receive two chapters ("Truman and the Coming of the Cold War," "Truman and the Crystallisation of the Cold War," "Nixon: The Peacemaker?" and "Nixon, Ford and the American Crisis") and Gerald R. Ford who shares one with Nixon, each post-war chief executive is allotted a single chapter. Those that address the administrations of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush are the most valuable. In these chapters Fraser and Murray wrestle with analysis of the recent past, a task that historians usually find challenging. Their conclusion, though, that, like Truman, George W. Bush "identified Asia as America's primary national security threat" seems misguided and outdated even for 2002 when the volume appeared.

There are a number of elements of the work that one finds troubling. Foremost among these is the employment of parenthetical citations. Rather than supply footnotes or endnotes (the standard for the historical profession), references are provided with only the author's name and date of publication. Perhaps this was a decision over which the authors had no control. Nevertheless, this choice does not add to the volume's readability and is something that historians accustomed to the standard will find frustrating. Similarly, Fraser and Murray's attempts to enliven their prose with metaphors might leave students puzzled. For example, in referring to Ronald Reagan's criticism of the Soviet Union's military build-up during the 1970s, the authors comment that the "pudding was notably over-egged." These, in addition to awkward turns of phrases, tend to obscure the historian's message. A perspective with which scholars of U.S. foreign policy will no doubt take issue is the insistence that America recoiled into "sterile" isolationism after World War I. Such an oversimplified characterization ignores events such as the Washington Naval Conference, the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the Dawes and Young Plans, as well as Roosevelt's initiatives to aid Britain during the 1930s. Walter McDougall's *Promised Land, Crusader State*, an acclaimed reinterpretation of U.S. foreign policy, provides a substantial argument concerning the myth of American isolationism that Fraser and Murray might have at least commented upon. A minor irritant is the authors' reference to September 11 as "11September" (note the quotation marks in the original). While historians find the British system of dating useful in a scholarly context, it is difficult to overlook the

suggestion that Americans (or anyone else in the world) refer to that day as "11 September."

British perspectives on American history can provide valuable insights (Paul Johnson's *A History of the American People* is a shining example), but Fraser and Murray's volume does not offer any new information or compelling analysis that might warrant its use in courses that focus on contemporary history or U.S. foreign relations.

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