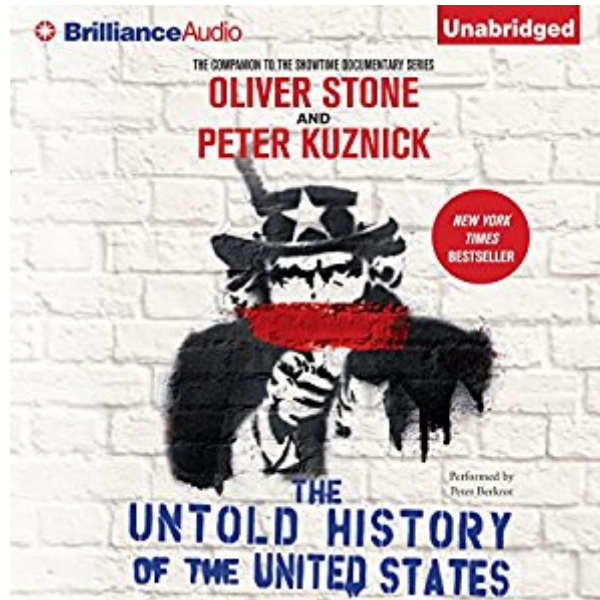


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The Untold History Of The United States



Synopsis

"At last the world knows America as the savior of the world!" —Woodrow Wilson

The notion of American exceptionalism, dating back to John Winthrop's 1630 sermon aboard the *Arabella*, still warps Americans' understanding of their nation's role in the world. Most are loathe to admit that the United States has any imperial pretensions. But history tells a different story as filmmaker Oliver Stone and historian Peter Kuznick reveal in this riveting account of the rise and decline of the American empire. They trace the American empire through the bloody U.S. suppression of the Filipino struggle for independence; the establishment of U.S. financial hegemony via World War I; the repeated U.S. interventions, covert operations, and wars in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East; the transformation of America into a prying national security state; the accumulation of vast fortunes by the wealthiest Americans; and troubling assaults on U.S. constitutional liberties. Aided by the latest archival findings and recently declassified documents and building on the research of the world's best scholars, Stone and Kuznick construct an often shocking but meticulously documented "people's history" of the American empire that offers startling context to the Bush-Cheney policies that put us at war in two Muslim countries and show us why the Obama administration has had such a difficult time cleaving a new path. Stone and Kuznick will introduce listeners to a pantheon of heroes and villains as they show not only how far the United States has drifted from its democratic traditions but the powerful forces that have struggled to get us back on track. The authors reveal that: The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were militarily unnecessary and morally indefensible. The United States, not the Soviet Union, bore the lion's share of responsibility for perpetuating the Cold War. The U.S. love affair with right-wing dictators has gone as far as overthrowing elected leaders, arming and training murderous military officers, and forcing millions of people into poverty. U.S.-funded Islamist fundamentalists, who fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan, have blown back to threaten the interests of the United States and its allies. U.S. presidents, especially in wartime, have frequently trampled on the Constitution and international law. The United States has brandished nuclear threats repeatedly and come terrifyingly close to nuclear war. American leaders often believe they are unbound by history, yet Stone and Kuznick argue that we must face our troubling history honestly and forthrightly in order to set a new course for the 21st century. Their conclusions will astonish even experts, but there is one question only listeners can answer: Is it too late for America to change?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I purchased this book with some trepidation as Stone is pretty well known as having a certain "bias" about US foreign policy and I feared the book might be a rant. Instead the book turned out to be a well-ordered and very-well footnoted history of roughly the last century of mainly, but not exclusively, American foreign policy, one that all too often has been shortsighted, foolish, and with the advent of the atomic bomb, terrifying. I'm a fairly old dude going on 71 and the more history books I read the more apparent it is that there is no such thing as "the truth" or "reality." Stone looks at the past using a different set of facts that the American Exceptionalist crowd would omit from their histories. From these two different viewpoints two different conclusions could be drawn; however, as long as the facts presented are correct, so is each different view. It's up to the reader to decide where the weight of the evidence falls. There were a number of times when I felt certain issues were dealt with too briefly - the Balfour Declaration being one - but given the scope of the book this brevity is understandable, and for those who might want a more thorough exegesis than a few sentences on something like Balfour whole books have been written. Guess my point is history, even very recent history, is comprised of many elements lurking in the shadows and a fuller understanding of events can only be achieved by looking at those the political class would rather have swept under the rug - permanently. This book is probably a must-read for those of us concerned with the fact this country spends nearly half the planet's military budget and has less-than-nothing to show for it, a stupendous misallocation of resources (at least in my book) that's gone on for now over half a century.

The authors of this book, Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick, tell us that: "The United States' run as a

global hegemon - the most powerful and dominant nation the world has ever seen - has been marked by proud achievements and terrible disappointments. It is the latter - the darker side of U. S. history - that we explore in the following pages." That there is a considerable dark side can be attested by the fact that this book is 750 pages long. I don't know how many historical incidents are encompassed within its covers but there are 91 pages of notes and 37 pages of index just to give you a clue. In the index itself entries dealing with nuclear arms race, nuclear warfare and nuclear weapons take up almost an entire page of small print - by far the largest number of entries in any one category. In second place are entries dealing with the CIA which take up a half a page. Fourteen chapters plus an introduction give us an alternative history of the growth of the American Empire as Stone and Kuznick see it. It's not a pretty picture (although there are many bright spots) and, while it may be untold, for the most part, it is not unknown. Although Donald Rumsfeld has stated: "We don't seek empires. We're not imperialistic. We never have been," dissenting voices have proclaimed otherwise. One of the earliest of these was General Smedley Butler, who at the end of his long and highly decorated career, said: "I spent thirty-three years and four months in active military service as a member of this country's most agile military force, the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from Second Lieutenant to Major General. And during that period, I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for big business, for Wall Street and for the bankers.

"History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors and issues." T.S. Eliot Those of you who have read Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present* (Perennial Classics) or *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong, Revised and Updated Edition* will devour Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick's *The Untold History of the United States*. These two intellects bring fresh insight to a benighted past. Minor footnotes and characters, like Henry Wallace, in our history's drama are brought to the forefront for once. The reader becomes Dante to Oliver Stone and Professor Kuznick's Virgil, taking us through the gates of Hell in our personal history. In these pages the real Truman, Eisenhower, Reagan are exposed, not extolled or lionized. It is inscrutable and unconscionable what Truman did in Hiroshima. The truth behind who really defeated Germany. Terror bombing in WWII to terrorism in present day. As Historian Henry Steele Commager once pointed out, "From the beginning of our history, we've been rather casual about our crimes." Although the book is a companion to the documentary series on Showtime, which is highly recommended, the book stands alone and independent; it covers, in 14 chapters, the most important moments where we got history wrong. Cognitive dissonance will kick in. A certain sciolism exists in our culture as we whistle in the dark.

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