



The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War

By Stephen Kinzer

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The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War By Stephen Kinzer

A joint biography of John Foster Dulles and Allen Dulles, who led the United States into an unseen war that decisively shaped today's world

During the 1950s, when the Cold War was at its peak, two immensely powerful brothers led the United States into a series of foreign adventures whose effects are still shaking the world.

John Foster Dulles was secretary of state while his brother, Allen Dulles, was director of the Central Intelligence Agency. In this book, Stephen Kinzer places their extraordinary lives against the background of American culture and history. He uses the framework of biography to ask: Why does the United States behave as it does in the world?

"The Brothers" explores hidden forces that shape the national psyche, from religious piety to Western movies--many of which are about a noble gunman who cleans up a lawless town by killing bad guys. This is how the Dulles brothers saw themselves, and how many Americans still see their country's role in the world. Propelled by a quintessentially American set of fears and delusions, the Dulles brothers launched violent campaigns against foreign leaders they saw as threats to the United States. These campaigns helped push countries from Guatemala to the Congo into long spirals of violence, led the United States into the Vietnam War, and laid the foundation for decades of hostility between the United States and countries from Cuba to Iran.

The story of the Dulles brothers is the story of America. It illuminates and helps explain the modern history of the United States and the world.

A "Kirkus Reviews "Best Nonfiction Book of 2013

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Editorial Review

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An author tending toward criticism of American foreign affairs (Overthrow, 2006), Kinzer casts a jaundiced eye on siblings who conducted them in the 1950s. Framing his assessment as a dual biography of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA director Allen Dulles, Kinzer roots their anti-Communist policies in their belief in American exceptionalism and its Wilsonian application to promote democracy in the world. Less abstractly, the Dulles brothers were politically connected Wall Street lawyers, servants of corporate power, according to Kinzer. Their personalities, however, were starkly different. John Foster was serious-minded and maritally faithful. Gregarious Allen was a serial cheater. With such character portraits as backdrop, Kinzer arraigns the Dulles brothers' operations against several countries. Detailing American actions in Iran, Guatemala, Indonesia, and Cuba, Kinzer crafts a negative perspective on the legacy of the Dulles brothers, whom he absolves slightly from blame because their compatriots widely approved of their providential sense of America's role in world affairs. A historical critique sure to spark debate. --Gilbert Taylor

From Bookforum

Two exceptionally important stories take up the bulk of Kinzer's book, and both are told with considerable insight and disciplined prose. The first is the tale of the "secret world war" of American violence and political subversion in the early half of the Cold War, and this is the story Kinzer most clearly wishes to tell. The second, closely related, is an institutional saga of the consequences that arose from the shared power of two brothers who simultaneously ran the CIA and the state department—the covert and public faces of American foreign policy. —Chris Bray

Review

"[A] fluently written, ingeniously researched, thrillerish work of popular history... Mr. Kinzer has brightened his dark tale with an abundance of racy stories. Gossip nips at the heels of history on nearly every page." *?The Wall Street Journal*

"Anyone wanting to know why the United States is hated across much of the world need look no farther than this book... A riveting chronicle." *?The New York Times Book Review*

"[*The Brothers*] is a bracing, disturbing and serious study of the exercise of American global power... Kinzer, a former foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*, displays a commanding grasp of the vast documentary record, taking the reader deep inside the first decades of the Cold War. He brings a veteran journalist's sense of character, moment and detail. And he writes with a cool and frequently elegant style." *?The Washington Post*

"[A] fast-paced and often gripping dual biography." *?The Boston Globe*

"Stephen Kinzer's sparkling new biography...suggests that the story of the Dulles brothers is the story of America." *?Washington Monthly*

"Two exceptionally important stories take up the bulk of Kinzer's book, and both are told with considerable insight and disciplined prose." *?Bookforum*

“The errors of the Dulles brothers are vividly described in this highly entertaining book...A thoroughly informative book.” ?*Revista: The Harvard Review of Latin America*

“A historical critique sure to spark debate.” ?*Booklist*

“The culmination of an oeuvre (*All the Shah's Men, Overthrow* and others) featuring the Dulles brothers in supporting roles, *The Brothers* draws them from the shadows, provoking a reevaluation of their influence and its effects.” ?*Kirkus.com*

“A secret history, enriched and calmly retold; a shocking account of the misuse of American corporate, political and media power; a shaming reflection on the moral manners of post imperial Europe; and an essential allegory for our own times.” ?*John le Carré*

“Kinzer tells the fascinating story of the Dulles brothers, central figures in U.S. foreign policy and intelligence activities for over four decades. He describes U.S. efforts to change governments during this period in Iran, Guatemala, Vietnam, Cuba, and other countries in exciting detail.” ?*John Deutch, former director, Central Intelligence Agency*

“As someone who reported from the Communist prison yard of Eastern Europe, I knew that the Cold War really was a struggle between Good and Evil. But Stephen Kinzer, in this compressed, richly-detailed polemic, demonstrates how at least in the 1950s it might have been waged with more subtlety than it was.” ?*Robert D. Kaplan, author of The Revenge of Geography*

“A disturbing, provocative, important book. Stephen Kinzer vividly brings the Dulles brothers, once paragons of American Cold War supremacy, to life and makes a strong case against the dangers of American exceptionalism.” ?*Evan Thomas, author of Ike's Bluff: President Eisenhower's Secret Battle to Save the World*

“The Dulles brothers, one a self-righteous prude, the other a charming libertine, shared a common vision: a world run from Washington by people like themselves. With ruthless determination, they pursued, acquired, and wielded power, heedless of the consequences for others. They left behind a legacy of mischief. Theirs is a whale of a story and Stephen Kinzer tells it with verve, insight, and just the right amount of indignation.” ?*Andrew J. Bacevich, author of Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War*

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