



"The True Flag"

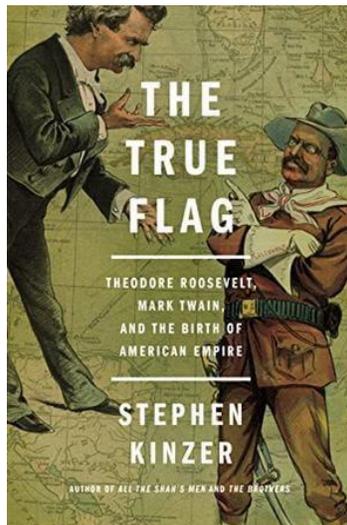
Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Twain, and the Birth of American Empire

Author: Stephen Kinzer

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(306 pp.)**

Although "The True Flag" mostly deals with Spanish-American War under President William McKinley, Stephen Kinzer, the author of this book presents a clear and comprehensible history of American imperialism which started at the end of the eighteenth century and well extended till the end of World War II.

McKinley (1897-1901) chose to abandon American Isolationism in favor of American imperialism to seek new markets for its industrial products and also driven by a sense of racial and cultural superiority of America. Under McKinley, The United States defeated Spain and, consequently, acquired territories in the western Pacific and Latin America which included the Philippines, Guam, Cuba and Puerto Rico. In the same year (1898) the U.S. also annexed Hawaii by overthrowing Queen Liliuokalani, the Hawaiian monarch.



Of course, there was also opposition to American imperialism voiced and debated by the intellectuals like Mark Twain, industrialists like Andrew Carnegie and the politicians belonging to the Anti-Imperialist League including Senator Carl Schurz. Many Southerners opposed American expansion for the fear that the non-whites coming from Cuba and the Philippines might undermine the supremacy of the White population. Labor leaders like Samuel Gompers were concerned about the effect on American wages of immigration from the Philippines. The passion ran so high on both sides that the nation, obviously, looked divided.

After the assassination of William McKinley in 1901, Theodore Roosevelt continued America's imperialistic policy. In a refute to anti-imperialists, he said the following:

"Their doctrines, if carried out, would make it incumbent upon us to leave the Apaches of Arizona to work out their own salvation, and to decline to interfere in a single Indian reservation. Their doctrines condemn your forefathers and mine for ever having settled in these United States."

Kinzer sets out to examine the central question of U.S. foreign policy: "Should we defend our freedom, or turn inward and ignore growing threats?" Though Kinzer doesn't answer this question, he asserts that the American entry into war with Spain in 1898 made the United States a world power. Kinzer presents the history in a very interesting way that compels the readers to wonder why America's foreign policy is still so oblivious and obtuse.

