

The Way of the Knife* Book Review*Michael Neal**

The CIA has had a fairly turbulent existence, and *The Way of the Knife* by Mark Mazzetti chronicles their more recent missions in journalistic detail. Mazzetti wastes no time in talking about the fumbles of the CIA. He demonstrates this in the account of Raymond Davis, an American spy who killed two men in Pakistan who approached his car with their weapons drawn. Immediately after, he radioed the American consulate for help, and while help somewhat arrived, the help went the opposite direction, and ended up hitting and killing a civilian. Mazzetti uses this incident to illustrate one of the prominent themes of the book: the deviation of the CIA from the role of intelligence gathering to militant operations.

To explain the shift in operations within the CIA, Mazzetti goes back to 1975, Gerald Ford's administration. Senator Frank Church formed a committee that was created to hear domestic abuses within the agency. However, President Ford "made an offhand comment to reporters, saying that if investigators dug deep enough, they might uncover a number of CIA attempts to assassinate foreign leaders" (45-46). This prompted the Church committee to not only look into these allegations, but they made them the sole focus of their hearings. Consequently, President Ford issued an executive order that would ban the United States government from ordering the assassination of foreign government heads of state and other politicians. According to Mazzetti, Ford's order would mark the clear shift of the CIA from assassination and militant operations back to the gathering of intelligence. However, it is not nearly that black and white. While the CIA was prohibited from assassinating foreign leaders, there were still plenty of other covert methods for the CIA to execute their plans, which lead

Mazzetti to a natural example like the Iran-Contra Affair. Not much later, Mazzetti brings the reader back to more recent times, times in which the CIA has regained much of its control that was taken by President Ford's order. George W. Bush had utilized the CIA greatly in the United States' War on Terror abroad, predominantly for capturing suspected terrorists, imprisoning them in detention centers around the world such as Guantanamo Bay, and interrogating them. Mazzetti explains certain concerns the Bush administration had involving CIA operations interfering with military operations. However, Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld "had become convinced that he could do what he wanted – even if the CIA was doing it in parallel – under the banner of 'traditional military activities'" (82). Nonetheless, there have been a number of discrepancies between the CIA and the military during recent conflicts.

Another key theme Mazzetti highlights is the holes in intelligence shared between the CIA, the United States, and even the militaries of other States. One of the best examples Mazzetti explains is the United States-Pakistan relationship. He describes it as having "the worst qualities of a failing marriage: Both sides long ago had stopped trusting each other but couldn't imagine splitting up" (26-27). Both Pakistan and the United States were caught in uncomfortable situations: Pakistan continues to view the Taliban as an ally, but does not want to risk making an enemy out of the United States. There are many reasons for distrust on both sides of the field, primarily because of the intelligence shared between the CIA and Pakistan. Mazzetti explains, that over the years both the CIA and Pakistan have withheld certain parts of intelligence from each other; sometimes crucial snippets were left out of reports. One of the examples Mazzetti shares in the book is about a joint CIA and ISI cell-phone monitoring of a group of individuals suspected of giving logistical support to Al Qaeda. However, Mazzetti explains, "the operation was only joint to a point: The CIA did not tell the Pakistanis that one of the cell-phone numbers

belonged to Abu Ahmed al-Kuwaiti, the alias of a man whom captured al Qaeda operatives had identified to the CIA years earlier as a personal courier to Osama bin Laden” (270). There were many other instances of this throughout the book that illustrated intelligence being withheld on all sides.

With these gaps in intelligence, the door for error is opened. When the door for error is opened, mistakes are made, people get hurt, and others are blamed. This is the time for the opportunists to make themselves known. Mazzetti points out another shift in not just intelligence, but in war itself. The military is becoming more and more privatized. He explains by using Blackwater USA, a private security firm that had been used for support in Iraq. In addition to security firms taking hold in places the military and the CIA could not, Mazzetti also spends time talking about Michele Ballarin, president of a company that creates body armor. She gained a large amount of interest in Somalia, and had several meetings set up within the country to help develop their military. In doing so, she gained popularity among the Somali, gaining the name “Amira”, or princess.

Mazzetti approached writing this book from the standpoint of a journalist. Each chapter has smaller sections within them: all stories of events that, at first, seem unrelated, but overall connect to a larger theme. For example, the sections often talk about one person or a group within the United States government, then will switch to an event across the globe in Afghanistan or Pakistan. The chapters later in the book seem to go back and forth from successes to failures of the CIA, though it is unknown if this is intentional or not. It holds multiple themes, but the most prevalent are the shift of CIA operations, the relationships between the CIA and the military of the United States and other States, and ever-growing private sector.