THE CIA AND THE PURSUIT OF SECURITY
History, Documents and Contexts

Huw Dylan, David V. Gioe and Michael S. Goodman
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The CIA and the Pursuit of Security

History, Documents and Contexts

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David V. Gioe and
Michael S. Goodman

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Foreword

Intelligence matters. Good intelligence keeps us safe; it helps us understand our place in the world, and it fosters sound decisions. Inaccurate information matters too. It corrodes our ability to understand reality and stunts our progress towards a better, safer world. This push and pull – between truth and fiction, trust and distrust – shapes not only our understanding of the present but also our understanding of history.

As the world becomes more complex and connected – tweets that shift markets in seconds, political and social movements that rise in an instant – it’s more important than ever to understand the path that brought us here. Accurate, dependable history is not just a concern for professors and curators. It’s vital for every citizen, allowing us to not only disentangle the complications of the current day but to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

An appreciation of history is especially critical in matters of intelligence. While no set of historical facts is immune from reappraisal, the history created and recorded by covert organisations is, by definition, more irregular than much of the standard historical record. As years turn to decades, as classifications expire and redactions are lifted, we must constantly reconcile new information with old, measuring long-held assumptions against fresh facts. That, of course, makes writing a book like this especially difficult – but even more necessary.

Any accounting of the history of the Central Intelligence Agency is particularly challenging because this constant churn continuously adds nuance to our understanding, sometimes even uprooting narratives entirely. As such, it’s incumbent on any volume of intelligence history to take a comprehensive, detailed look at the matters it examines. It requires both a wide lens and a zoom, as well as perspective that can allow the picture to come into clearer focus in the years ahead.

I believe the authors of this book accomplish that task. They tell an immersive story, spanning more than seven decades since the Agency was founded. David Gioe, Michael Goodman and Huw Dylan examine
historical eras through declassified documents, and, like any experienced CIA analyst, tell us the unique context and crosswinds surrounding each time period. They spell out the contingencies considered, the consequences wrought. They place us inside the minds and consciences of the analysts and decision-makers of the day, laying bare the grey inside stories that may seem black or white today.

It’s an approach worth applauding – and a style of scholarship and popular criticism that I wish we saw more of in the world, particularly in appraisals of the CIA. Secret organisations are easy to criticise. Citizens quickly grow sceptical, and often rightly so. And when information remains missing from the public record, observers tend to rush to the darkest corner, filling in any gaps with their worst assumptions.

This book is a useful corrective to that impulse. Gioe, Goodman and Dylan understand that if citizens are to have confidence in covert organisations, the history must be told honestly, unflinchingly and completely. It avoids the pitfalls of sycophancy to an agency that clearly has its flaws, while also avoiding the assumption that agents and analysts working in secret must be up to no good – an approach to criticism in no short supply when it comes to the CIA.

In this book, readers are trusted to decide for themselves. The authors understand their obligation to shed light on these once-held secrets responsibly rather than salaciously. It is written with the understanding that the vast majority of the tens of thousands of Americans who have served this agency have done so honourably and in service to a nation they love. I am one of those Americans. I am proud of my service – but it doesn’t mean I agree with every decision made or every action taken by the Agency. That’s true, I imagine, for most of my former colleagues, and the colleagues still hard at work today. But I also believe the CIA is a cornerstone in America’s security. I believe our nation is safer because of the women and men who dedicate their lives to serving it. And I believe that the courage and quiet sacrifice of those humble servants is honoured by this book.

*The CIA and the Pursuit of Security: History, Documents and Contexts* is a worthy and necessary addition to the literature and scholarship on the CIA. You’ll see how women and men grappled with the pursuit of American interests and values amid an evolving, complex and often dangerous world. When you’re done, you’ll see an agency not without its faults, but also not without its triumphs. And hopefully, you’ll appreciate better that within the historical record, it’s important to leave room for both.

Michael Morell,
Former Acting Director of the CIA
Acknowledgements

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DVG: Thanks to my family for waiting for me for dinner. Donna Artusy and MAJ Jim Twist for invaluable research assistance and advice on the chapters dealing with CIA and technology. The Army Cyber Institute at West Point and Dr Edward Sobiesk for institutional support and professional encouragement to write this book. As a US government employee, David Gioe wishes to note that this analysis does not necessarily reflect that of the United States Military Academy, the US Army, the Department of Defense or the US government.

MSG: His lovely family for their patience and humour; Huw and Dave for their humour; and West Ham for their humour. One of these is not intentional . . .
Introduction

‘The essential skill of a secret service is to get things done secretly and deniably.’

John Bruce Lockhart, a former Deputy Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service

Perhaps surprisingly for an organisation carapaced in secrecy, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is one of the best-known institutions around the world. Its activities since its creation in 1947 have had a global resonance; they have occasionally generated internal controversy and strife in the US; they have left a substantial mark in popular culture. Famous (or infamous) though it is, however, the CIA is a profoundly misunderstood organisation. Myths and conspiracies have surrounded the agency since its earliest days, and these have blossomed over the decades. Fact and fiction coexist and are tightly interwoven in the public imagination concerning the CIA. The facts are often more fascinating than the myths.

What are the facts; what feeds the fiction? It is a global agency with a worldwide mission, chartered to prevent strategic surprise and support American policymaking by narrowing the cone of uncertainty for the president and the executive branch, and the armed forces they command. The CIA fulfils this responsibility by collecting, analysing, assessing and disseminating intelligence gathered though all sources to its customers in government. It recruits spies in foreign countries, it manages a substantial technical intelligence capacity, it processes publicly available information to supplement classified collection efforts; it is home to enough subject matter experts in the form of linguists, area studies specialists, psychologists and technical experts to staff a university; it maintains myriad liaison relationships with partner intelligence services all over the world; it maintains a paramilitary capability and undertakes disruptive, covert actions when ordered to do so. But, primarily, it is an agency concerned with gathering and processing secret intelligence and using it to enable US political and military leaders to make more effective policy choices. Despite its fame, it is a very secretive agency.
Myths and conspiracies feed upon secrecy, certainly. But the CIA’s activities have also generated plenty of supplementary fodder. Intelligence services are more than mechanisms for intelligence collection and analysis; they also serve as foreign policy tools, undertaking deniable, yet often visible, action to influence world events on behalf of their governments. Indeed, no understanding of America’s relationship with Cuba, its containment doctrine or rollback strategy can be found absent an appreciation of how successive policymakers attempted to use the paramilitary and covert action capacity of the CIA as a lever to exert pressure on their targets. Covert actions constitute a small percentage of the CIA’s overall activities, but they are intrinsic to the agency, part of its DNA as a creature born of the early Cold War.

One need only read the text of US National Security Directive 10/2, promulgated in 1948, less than a year after the creation of the agency, to understand its pedigree in the field of covert actions. The directive authorised the CIA to engage in: ‘Propaganda; economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and support of indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries of the free world.’ The mandate has changed only slightly over the years, but the CIA continues to enjoy a broad capacity to conduct operations designed to influence as well as to understand targets. It is these activities that receive the lion’s share of media interest, and form the basis for most of Hollywood’s engagement with the secret world. They also help propagate the myths surrounding CIA. In an environment of infotainment it has become ever more complicated to distil fact from fiction and understand CIA’s role in international history, much less contemporary international affairs. This book aims to dispel some of the wilder notions about the agency and its activities, and replace them with historical analysis based upon properly declassified primary sources.

We have written this book with the aim of illuminating a broader cross-section of the CIA’s history at several critical points in the twentieth century and on into the twenty-first. This book builds upon several excellent books on CIA, including by authors who are familiar names to any intelligence historian: Christopher Andrew, Richard Aldrich, Joe Trento and John Ranelagh, to name but four. But we write with the benefit of several recent documentary releases, concerning both historic and contemporary issues. Therefore, this book will complement earlier volumes through the reinterpretation of several key events in CIA’s history, recent and more distant. We aim to bring to the fore certain understudied aspects of CIA’s past, including an explicit emphasis on the role of technological innova-
tion, disinformation and political warfare, but also the Anglo-American special intelligence relationship that has been a durable yet hidden feature of CIA’s history. A focus on Anglo-American intelligence liaison in this volume is our attempt to shine a special light on the relationships between intelligence agencies, between intelligence officers and between Washington and Whitehall, who used their foreign intelligence services to undergird and manage the special political relationship.

We publish this volume at a time when the prominence of the CIA in the media and in general political debate is very pronounced. Rarely does a day pass without a commentary on the CIA in the news (or a former CIA officer commenting upon the news). This is part of a longer trend of publicising and, in so doing, attempting to weaponise the products and actions of the agency in support of one political cause or another. The 9/11 attacks and the later debate concerning Iraq’s weapons programmes thrust the agency into the limelight at the turn of the century; the more recent discussions concerning Russian interference in the 2016 US election and the subsequent special counsel investigation conducted by Robert S. Mueller have ensured that it remained there. But much of the political discussion as well as media coverage of CIA is ahistorical in nature, and may leave the non-specialist wondering what the historical antecedents of these often-breathless headlines (or tweets) might be. We hope to offer such perspective with this book. For specialist or academic readers, we hope to offer a deeper understanding of how the various primary source documents fit together in the broad sweep of global history, and to pose a reminder that the hidden hand of intelligence has operated in the background, sometimes subtly, sometimes not so subtly, throughout the history of American international relations. Integrating intelligence work into our understanding of past and current events can yield a fuller and more nuanced perspective on military and diplomatic history in particular – a lantern for what has been, and a headlight for what might be.

Our approach is to illuminate CIA’s past by featuring and contextualising primary source documents from CIA’s archive, and to connect the modern reader with CIA’s history. We aim to illustrate that many issues currently in the media spotlight actually have their roots in an earlier age, often under not totally dissimilar circumstances. Essentially, this is an effort then to re-historicise CIA’s past with the benefit of time and additional documentary evidence. While not every signal event in CIA’s history can be explored in a single volume, we hope that the twenty-five chapters in this volume, when taken together, will demonstrate and characterise CIA’s place in the warp and woof of American and international history.

Intelligence history has come a long way since its inception as a serious topic for academic study in the 1980s. It is an established subject at a number
of universities; there is a booming research and writing culture, particularly in the English-speaking world; and it is steadily becoming a more globalised academic topic. But we have barely scratched the surface of the role and influence of the hidden hand in international and domestic affairs – as the leading intelligence historian Christopher Andrew identified not too long ago, a wide intellectual space is still available for continued intelligence-based contributions. He observed as early as 1984 that intelligence studies was the ‘missing dimension’ of twentieth-century diplomatic history, and two decades later he could still lament: ‘Intelligence is still denied its proper place in studies of the Cold War – and indeed of international relations in general.’ As he noted, and as any historian of intelligence will attest to, the secrecy surrounding intelligence agencies, their work, and their records is a fundamental reason for this. And in many official quarters attitudes have not changed that much since 1984, when British prime minister Margaret Thatcher rather bluntly stated her view that ‘too much has been said and written about intelligence and less should be in future’. Thankfully, this attitude does not enjoy universal support; more researchers are willing to concede that intelligence history is a valuable, occasionally key, ingredient in our understanding of contemporary and Cold War history, and the progress in researching intelligence agencies and their work has developed significantly. Indeed, the growing body of work continues to demonstrate that the neglect of intelligence history by previous generations led often to a skewed perspective on major political and military events.

Given the level of secrecy concerning the CIA and its work, locating reliable source material is a peculiar challenge for intelligence historians; the document declassification and release process presents historiographical challenges. The procedure and timeliness of document declassification, as well as the chronological order of revelations, has led to an availability bias for historians and journalists, and therefore distortions in the public understanding of international history. For instance, the role of signals intelligence and codebreaking has been underappreciated, whereas the role of special operations and human intelligence is more widely examined. This trend, holding true since the Second World War, is perhaps best illustrated by examining the relative trajectories of the histories concerning the wartime British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) compared with those of wartime sigint and codebreaking. The former dominated the latter for decades. But this was not because of its relative importance: it was because historians could access the files of the SOE and the OSS, whereas they could not access the files of Bletchley Park to write the history of Enigma and the Ultra secret. One must always bear in mind the advice of the historian Richard Aldrich to remember that the archive is not an analogue for reality; the researcher
needs to dig deep. The historian also must remember that the challenges posed by the relative paucity of official sources are not necessarily resolved by the availability of the materials that have been leaked en masse over recent years, but are, instead, often rather compounded by questions over the contextualisation and reliability of these revelations. Intelligence and secrecy, past and present: plus ça change.

We thus extend an invitation to both the lay and specialist audiences to read on and seek new insights and new interpretations for documents that tell us something consequential about CIA’s history and its role in American politics and international affairs. We also welcome practitioners to reconnect with CIA’s history in these pages, to draw linkages between the past and present, and to see how previous generations of intelligence officers faced an international system that they found challenging. Famed CIA analyst and historian Sherman Kent argued that ‘the only reason for reconstructing the history of a government agency is to further the operational efficiency of that agency. This cannot be history for history’s sake. It must be history for the improvement of today’s and tomorrow’s operations.’ We would certainly agree that the lessons of history need to be identified, lest mistakes or missteps be unnecessarily repeated. However, while Kent’s rationale may be compelling for the official historians at CIA or in other intelligence communities, we wish to broaden the scope of resonance for readers from all professions and perspectives. Our purpose in writing this book is to explore newly available documents (and fresh practitioner insights), to recontextualise existing primary source documents in concert with scholarly literature and to reveal an updated interpretation of CIA’s place both in the world and also vis-à-vis American policymakers. In that sense, it is in fact history for its own sake, a chronicle of the CIA and its activities during the turbulent decades of the Cold War and the early twenty-first century.

Issues of transparency are attendant with any contemporary discussion of intelligence agencies. While this was not always so, the ‘right to know’ what is being done in the public’s name is a centrepiece of modern discourse concerning the CIA, leaving it and its sister agencies struggling with how to balance security and transparency. It is perhaps worth noting, however, that the CIA has travelled far further down the road of (relative) transparency than practically any other major intelligence agency. A global comparison may be best to illuminate the situation: no other intelligence agency releases so much material about its operations, its analytical assessments, and its structure and inner workings. Beyond declassification of material, CIA directors are public figures whose speeches and published statements give further details about CIA’s positions. To be sure, overclassification is a major issue in the US intelligence community. CIA has resisted declas-
sification mandates on several occasions and has been forced to release information in response to Freedom of Information Act requests, legal challenges and congressional oversight investigations. CIA will never declassify enough material to satisfy those who believe in total transparency; nor will any level of transparency satiate the die-hard conspiracy theorists who see the hidden hand of the CIA behind any and every significant global event. But in comparison with other global intelligence services, including those of its closest ally, the British intelligence community, the CIA leads by a wide margin. In fact, that a book on CIA using primary source documents can be written at all is a testament to how far CIA has come in declassification.

Since America developed a peacetime intelligence bureaucracy at the end of the Second World War, the CIA has been at the heart of the American pursuit of security. Like its foe the KGB, it has been both sword and shield – a hidden hand in pursuit of foreign policy objectives and the first line of defense against foreign threats. Former CIA Director, General Michael Hayden stated in 2007 that this has, by and large, been an honourable mission, noting that ‘We can, and should, be proud of the many great things CIA has done, and will do, to defend the United States in a very dangerous world.’ Not everyone would agree, of course. Several of the subsequent chapters are concerned with instances of controversy, national and international, some of it profound. An agency operating for so long, so broadly, and at the cutting edge of US foreign policy will inevitably become entangled in moral hazard. No intelligence agency can avoid wrestling with difficult ethical dilemmas; nor can (or, at least, should) responsible policymakers. How to manage these risks is one of the big questions of our time. The answer, or, certainly, the debate, should be coloured by an understanding of the lessons of history. The following pages offer an insight into how the CIA developed over the past seven decades, and how it navigated the fraught international environment in its mission to keep the US secure. Reality can be more interesting than myth or fiction.

Notes

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