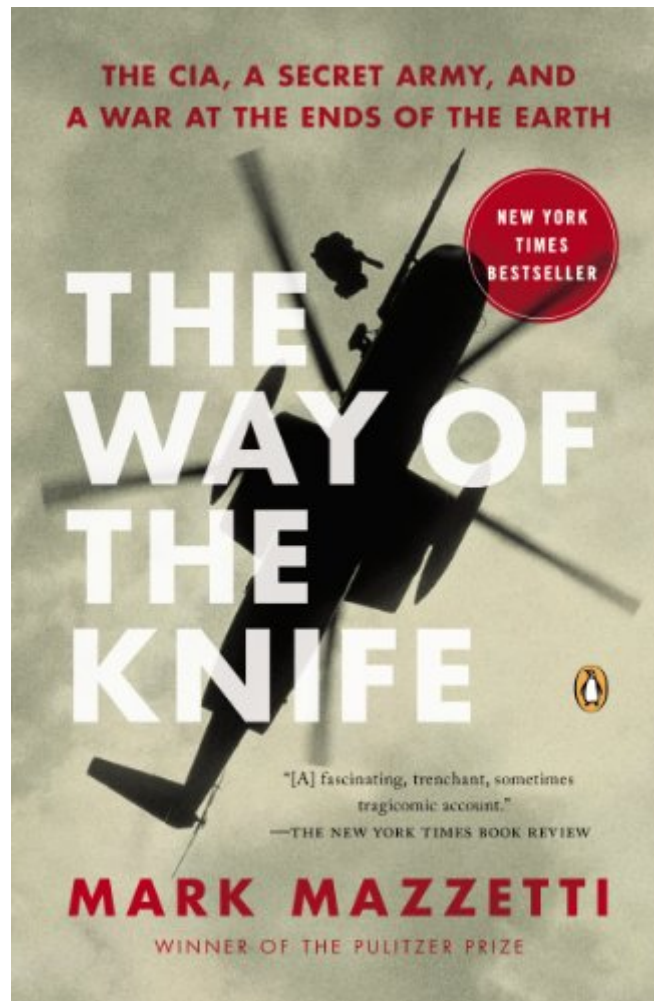


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The Way Of The Knife: The CIA, A Secret Army, And A War At The Ends Of The Earth



Synopsis

A Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter's riveting account of the transformation of the CIA and America's special operations forces into man-hunting and killing machines in the world's dark spaces: the new American way of war. The most momentous change in American warfare over the past decade has taken place away from the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq, in the corners of the world where large armies can't go. *The Way of the Knife* is the untold story of that shadow war: a campaign that has blurred the lines between soldiers and spies and lowered the bar for waging war across the globe. America has pursued its enemies with killer drones and special operations troops; trained privateers for assassination missions and used them to set up clandestine spying networks; and relied on mercurial dictators, untrustworthy foreign intelligence services, and proxy armies. This new approach to war has been embraced by Washington as a lower risk, lower cost alternative to the messy wars of occupation and has been championed as a clean and surgical way of conflict. But the knife has created enemies just as it has killed them. It has fomented resentments among allies, fueled instability, and created new weapons unbound by the normal rules of accountability during wartime. Mark Mazzetti tracks an astonishing cast of characters on the ground in the shadow war, from a CIA officer dropped into the tribal areas to learn the hard way how the spy games in Pakistan are played to the chain-smoking Pentagon official running an off-the-books spy operation, from a Virginia socialite whom the Pentagon hired to gather intelligence about militants in Somalia to a CIA contractor imprisoned in Lahore after going off the leash. At the heart of the book is the story of two proud and rival entities, the CIA and the American military, elbowing each other for supremacy. Sometimes, as with the raid that killed Osama bin Laden, their efforts have been perfectly coordinated. Other times, including the failed operations disclosed here for the first time, they have not. For better or worse, their struggles will define American national security in the years to come.

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Customer Reviews

This book is about the fundamental changes that have occurred in the CIA and the US govt as to how to wage war against non-state enemies in the post 9/11 world. In presenting a composite picture of these changes, the author shows how the roles of the CIA and the Pentagon have overlapped and even switched. He raises moral and ethical questions associated with conducting 'war' on a country without ever declaring 'war', killing 'enemies' in foreign lands by remotely piloted drones and outsourcing espionage and killing to private firms and mercenaries. These are thought-provoking questions to ponder about. Mark Mazetti traces the philosophy of the CIA over the past fifty years as follows: In the 1960s, the CIA was allowed to carry out assassinations overseas as part of its job. In the 70s, President Ford reversed all that, forbidding the CIA from being a killing machine and instead making it focus on intelligence gathering and spying as its primary job. However, 9/11 changed all that yet again, with the CIA getting into the business of tracking down Islamic extremists, incarcerating and torturing them overseas. The adverse reaction to this practice and the Congressional indictments that followed, made them choose the silver bullet of killing terrorists abroad again through remote-controlled drones without opting for on-the-ground assassination squads. In doing so, the American government has outsourced the basic functions of spycraft to private contractors, making the American way of war morph from clashes between tank columns - into the shadows, outside the declared war zones. In the process, the constraints on who can be killed, where they can be killed and when they can be killed have been conveniently blurred.

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